

# JUDAISM

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## **MARTIN BUBER ON HIS CENTENNIAL A TRIBUTE AND AN EVALUATION**

**Meir Ben-Horin — Michael Fishbane — Eva Jospe  
Edward K. Kaplan — William E. Kaufman  
Ruth Link-Salinger — Ernst Simon**

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

## *The First Reader*

### *Martin Buber at his Centennial*

One of the seminal religious thinkers of modern times, and unquestionably the most influential Jewish religious philosopher, Martin Buber, was born 100 years ago on February 8, 1878. The centenary of his birth is being marked by conferences and publications throughout the world, in non-Jewish as well as Jewish circles, and the current issue of JUDAISM contains several papers dealing with Buber's life and thought.

We doubt whether a clearer and more balanced presentation is available anywhere than in the essay by *Eva Jospe*, "Encounter: The Thought of Martin Buber," which inaugurates our symposium. It is an excellent introduction for those unfamiliar with Buber's work, yet even the initiate will appreciate this concise yet thoroughly adequate summary of his worldview.

The impact of Buber on religious thought in the twentieth century has been extraordinary both in its range and depth. His works have been translated into many languages, while studies, interpretations and critiques of his ideas have continued to appear in a virtually unending stream.

His worldwide influence constitutes one-half of a paradox. The other is the relatively limited role that he has played in contemporary Jewish thought. The most distinguished Jewish theologians of our age, with few exceptions, have been influenced only slightly by Buber, at least on a conscious level. What explains the fact that this major prophet of our age has achieved but little honor in his own country?

His lifelong associate and friend, *Ernst Simon*, offers an explanation of this phenomenon in terms of Buber's own spiritual development. Simon avers that, at each stage, Buber won disciples for his ideas among his own kinsmen. However, as he moved on to a new phase, his erstwhile followers remained wedded to his earlier ideas and, thus, parted company with their former master. I would suggest that other factors also played their part in the situation. Buber's highly individualistic faith made little room for community. His exposition of the encounter between God and man stressed the experience of Revelation rather than the content of its message. For Jewish tradition, Torah, the product of man's meeting with God, is primary; the experience of the I-Thou encounter is, except perhaps for the mystics, secondary. Thus, Buber seems to offer little guidance for grappling with the pivotal issue of halakhah, which has always been the bedrock of the Jewish religion.

Whatever merit may inhere in these considerations, Ernst Simon's presentation of Buber's spiritual odyssey, "The Builder of Bridges," is a major contribution toward the understanding of Buber in our day.



While Buber was enriching twentieth century Judaism in Germany and Israel, Mordecai M. Kaplan was making his distinguished contribution to religious thought in the United States. Though these two strong personalities differed radically in their approach to religion and life, nevertheless, there are interesting points of contact and harmony between them. These are explored in a careful analysis, "Mordecai M. Kaplan's Critique of Buber," by *Meir Ben-Horin*.

An analysis of another aspect of Buber's work appears in the paper by *William E. Kaufman*, "The Mysticism of Martin Buber: An Essay On Methodology." Here are definitions, differing views and a conclusion on the intriguing topic implied in the title.

The first great source in the Jewish tradition that was to prove a stimulus to Buber's creative career was the world of Hasidism. It was Hasidic lore and legend that served him as an entrance into the palace of Jewish religion. The second Jewish world which swam into his ken, actually the oldest and the greatest achievement of the Jewish spirit, was the Bible. Not only was it a life-long subject of study and interpretation for Buber, but he devoted many years with Franz Rosenzweig, and later alone, to a new and extraordinary translation of the Bible into German. Its unique significance is assessed by *Michael Fishbane* in his paper, "Martin Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible."

Buber's thought has often been described as being individualistic rather than oriented toward community, isolating the human person instead of building areas of communication to humanity and nature. This contention—or accusation—*Edward K. Kaplan* rebuts. In his paper, "Martin Buber and the Drama of Otherness: The Dynamics of Love, Art and Faith," he points out that Buber's stress upon dialogue and on the reality of "the Other" confronting the "I," serves not to separate but to link the individual human personality to humankind, to the universe and to God. The author proceeds to spell out the implications of Buber's thought for education, friendship, marriage, poetry and religion.

The incredible literary output which Buber produced during his lifetime was matched by a voluminous correspondence which far exceeded the usual practical notes that constitute the bulk of letter-writing in our day. He corresponded with many of the leading intellectual figures of the age, and his letters, edited and annotated in three sumptuous volumes, have now been published. They serve as the basis of the review-essay "Buber, The Man of Letters," by *Ruth Link-Salinger*, who relates them to the important spiritual currents of the age.

### *Business is Good*

In advanced circles today, it is customary to denigrate the upward mobility of American Jews during the twentieth century. The removal of

Jews from original areas of settlement, like the East Side of New York, the South Side of Philadelphia, or the West Side of Chicago, and similar ghettos, to more livable areas like Harlem, Washington Heights and, ultimately the suburbs, has been a subject of condescension, if not of scorn, on the part of American Jewry's critics, whose host is legion.

In his paper, "American Jews and the Business Mentality," *Edward S. Shapiro* examines the phenomenon and concludes that, on balance, it represented a very healthy manifestation of the will to survive and should be the subject of praise rather than of condemnation.

### *Finding the Appropriate Words*

Within the past few years, there has been a far-flung development of interest—literary, historical and philosophic—in the Holocaust. Every aspect of this unspeakable horror is being explored. Studies are appearing on its background in modern anti-Semitism and its older roots in some aspects of Christian theological teaching. Documentation is being brought to light on the structure of the bureaucracy of destruction created by the Nazi butchers. The agony of mass Jewish suffering is described in the heart-rending words of the martyrs themselves. The glory of the heroic Jewish resistance in the Ghettos, without allies or outside support, is being increasingly revealed. The relationship of the annihilation of the six-sevenths of European Jewry to the rebirth of the State of Israel is being discussed. Articles, books, lectures, conferences and courses dealing with all the various aspects of the Holocaust continue to multiply.

Among the scholars who have sought to come to grips with this monstrous evil, *Roy* and *Alice Eckardt* occupy a unique place. Their lives have long been devoted to a battle for purging classical and contemporary Christian theology of its anti-Semitic bias. It was a foregone conclusion that they would soon be drawn to the study of the Holocaust. In a thoughtful paper, "Studying the Holocaust's Impact Today: Some Dilemmas of Language and Methods," the Eckardts offer a significant contribution to the methodology of Holocaust research. They call attention to the pitfalls that confront the student as he seeks the goal that they well describe as "a kind of distancing that is, at the same time, nearness." The general reader, as well as students and scholars, will find this paper indispensable for understanding and evaluating the mass of material which is rapidly accumulating on the Holocaust.

### *Jews and Israel Are Different*

Basic to the scientific method is the principle of categorization. That is to say, a phenomenon is regarded as understood when it can be classified in a familiar group. Its position within a class makes it possible to develop generalizations about it and deal with it. The value of this proce-

ture is undeniable and need not be belabored. Nonetheless, the world is not always so neat and tidy. There are exceptions in nature and man, as well as in history that prove intractable.

A striking instance of the perils of categorization is the Jewish people. Fundamental to a true understanding of Jews and Judaism is the recognition of Jewish uniqueness, whether conceived of in religious or secular terms. Whenever this attribute is ignored or denied, widespread and deep-seated misunderstanding inevitably results.

In his paper, "Toward A Jewish Definition of Statehood for Israel," *Daniel J. Elazar* deals with the unique quality of Jewish political thought through the ages. He points out that, in our own time, the State of Israel constitutes a special type of political structure, directly affecting its conduct of both domestic and foreign affairs.

This attribute is not inherently better or worse. The unique and complex character of the State of Israel is reflected in several other aspects of the national life. Thus, the existence of "unprincipled secularism," to which the author refers, has its counterpart in the growth of "unprincipled religiosity," which extends into many sectors beyond the political arena. The most striking intrusion of politics beyond its normal province in democratic countries is in the sphere of education. This is particularly true on primary and secondary levels, where it is carried on almost exclusively along rigid party lines.

R. G.



# ***Encounter: The Thought of Martin Buber***

EVA JOSPE

FEBRUARY 8, 1978, MARKED THE 100th anniversary of the birth of Martin Buber, the Jewish thinker whose name has become synonymous with the terms "dialogue" and "I and Thou," and whose central ideas—far from being truly understood—have become popularized if not bowdlerized in, or by, the minds of many. With Coffee Houses being called "I and Thou," and Encounter Groups being featured attractions of Single Resorts, it seems especially important to give the thought of the foremost propounder of a philosophy of encounter its just due. The following pages constitute an attempt to trace the influences that led to the development of this philosophy, to present its premises and goals, and to give at least an indication of its validity by pointing out the principal areas to which it applies.

Martin Buber was born in Vienna in 1878 and died in Jerusalem in 1965. Since his parents were divorced when he was a very young child, he was raised in the unusually cultured household of his paternal grandparents in Lemberg, then Austrian Galicia. In addition to being a rich merchant and landowner and a secularly widely educated man, Solomon Buber was a renowned Talmud scholar. His grandson was, therefore, from early childhood on, exposed to the learned discussions of famous visitors to the Buber household. And with German, Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish spoken at home and in school, the boy grew up equally steeped in Jewish and European culture. During his university studies in Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Austria, his wide-ranging fields of concentration included languages, art and literature, politics, sociology, psychology, education, mythology, philosophy, comparative religion, and theology.

He was later to write and lecture on all of those subjects, and his output, spanning sixty years, was enormous. Yet he did not wish to specialize in any one of these diverse fields, for he saw them all as interrelated. Actually, the term "interrelated" could almost serve as a one-word characterization of Buber's entire thought. It epitomizes his foremost concern which determined all of his thinking and his every activity: to establish relations between two or more entities that may, on the surface, seem unrelated; to create a mutuality of interests, or a meeting of minds and a sense of communality where it had not seemed likely;

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to achieve unity out of diversity through an encounter of, and by, the different. What he wished, therefore, to do—and what he largely succeeded in doing—was to develop a philosophical anthropology (a term borrowed from his teacher, Dilthey), by which he meant a view of man<sup>1</sup> in his totality as a many-faceted yet entirely integrated human being.

Along the way to creating such an anthropological philosophy, he became, among other things, a journalist, editor and publisher, an early Zionist ideologue, and a professor of Jewish philosophy and ethics as well as of the history of religions at the University of Frankfurt/Main. In the 1920s he started to translate the Bible from Hebrew into German, a labor of love which he shared first with Franz Rosenzweig, and then continued alone after the latter's death in 1929. He completed the gigantic project thirty-two years later, in Jerusalem. With the coming of Hitler, Buber lost his position at the University in Frankfurt. But he soon became involved in reviving a singular institution that had been conceived of, and was for, a time, guided by Franz Rosenzweig, though it had not survived its founder's death: the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus*, a house of intensive Jewish studies where adults pursued learning for the sake of learning, not for the sake of earning.

During this period, Buber also developed what might best be described as “consciousness-raising” resource material for adult Jewish studies, a task of immeasurable import for the shattered psyche of German Jewry, and he became instrumental in the training of teachers for Jewish schools which had to be hurriedly established after all “Aryan” schools were closed to Jewish students. He continued this spiritual rescue-work until 1938, when he emigrated to Palestine, where he once again became a professor, teaching social philosophy at the Hebrew University until a few years before his death. At the same time, he wrote much for publication and went on extended lecture tours in Europe and America.

Though it was Judaism and its classical literature that nourished him throughout his life, he also synthesized in his own person and writings several other cultural sources. Both in content and style, much of his work reflects his early and profound interest in mysticism, though, in his later years, he emphatically denied being a mystic (partly because he refused, on principle, to be typecast, partly because his personal development had taken a different direction). But he could not deny being a poet. In the Vienna of his youth, “to live meant to be immersed in art, and to think meant to be immersed in poetry” (Maringer). The effect of this total immersion stayed with him for life. Even in his most theoretical writings, Buber, the poet, occasionally gets in the way of Buber, the thinker. Moreover, his romantically complex style, at times creatively beautiful, at

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1. To avoid stylistic awkwardness, “man” will be used throughout this article in a generic sense and, as such, encompasses woman. [E.J.]

times badly overwritten, tends to obscure his message. The reader may become intoxicated with the mere sound of it all, or he may share the frustration of no less than a Socrates who once chided a poet for his inability to explain what he had said so beautifully.

Yet, though Buber often chooses to be poetic rather than precise, and though he surely neither was, nor probably ever wished to be, a systematic thinker, he has created a philosophy of life, something that one might almost call a "how-to" blueprint for living. This blueprint is presented largely in phenomenological terms and not as an abstractly reasoned discourse. That is, the author tends to describe some personal experience instead of offering a logical argument in support of some philosophical assertion. He may well have derived his *ad hoc*, illustrative method from Rabbinic literature and from Hasidic sources. For Martin Buber all but "discovered" Hasidism. Observing its latter-day adherents and their way of life during his boyhood in Galicia, he was so enthralled with what he saw and heard that, years later, when he was in search of spiritual roots, he returned there to study the teachings of Hasidism in depth, and to collect, and later translate, its rich source material for publication in the West. His findings exerted a lasting influence upon his entire outlook upon life.

These findings have been severely criticized by Buber's erstwhile colleague at the Hebrew University, Gershom Scholem. Scholem, probably today's world-authority on Jewish mysticism and its offspring, Hasidism, accuses Buber of arbitrariness (if not limited knowledge) in his selections of Hasidic source material, and of presenting these selections in a highly one-sided and idealized manner. Worse, Scholem feels that Buber, in a "strange mixture of oversimplification, error and truth," has reshaped the Hasidic outlook upon life in general, and upon religious life in particular, so as to conform to his—Buber's—own. This criticism cannot be dismissed lightly by any serious student of Hasidism. But for us, here, it is of no immediate significance, especially since Buber himself seems to have regarded it as rather irrelevant. This, it seems, is because these two men speak a basically different language, and take a basically different approach to their work. Scholem argues as a "pure" scholar, something Buber did not claim to be, at least not in the narrowly defined way that insists on objectivity and demands impeccable attention to detail. Buber's mind reached for the stars, and was not really concerned with the tiny asterisks that must festoon the lower margin of any academically respectable page. For Scholem, Hasidism is a "historical phenomenon" and, as such, an object of his detached *research*. For Buber, Hasidism is "the greatest phenomenon we know in the history of the spirit . . . a society which lives by its faith" and, as such, it constitutes an answer to his own religious *search*.<sup>2</sup>

2. Eventually, though, Buber came to display a more critical attitude toward this "greatest phenomenon in history," particularly vis-à-vis the "Zaddikism" (exploitation by unscrupulous "leaders") into which the movement had, in his view, here or there deteriorated.

When he started out on this search as a young man, he was dissatisfied with the spiritlessness of formal religion as he knew it in the cities and among the intelligentsia of the West. At first, he was looking only for that meaning of Judaism which, he felt, lay buried somewhere in Eastern Europe, waiting to be unearthed—and to be unearthed by him. What he found surpassed his expectations. It nearly overwhelmed him in its creative richness of heart and mind, its profound insights into human nature, its emotional warmth—all indispensable elements for that renewal of Judaism which he fervently sought. But he saw in Hasidism a significance that transcends the limits of Judaism. “Hasidic truth,” he wrote, is, or must become, “vitally important” for all religion, and for all of life. “The Hasidic teaching is the proclamation of rebirth,” a rebirth primarily of Judaism, but, in a larger sense, a rebirth of human spirituality. And it is in this mood and mode that Buber made himself a filter through which the accumulated wealth of Hasidic tales and teachings passed and, in the process, might have become both somewhat purified and somewhat less authentic.

What are these teachings, what is this spirituality, and what is Hasidism? Compressing the Hasidic world-view into the briefest possible form, and stressing only those of its aspects that seem to be reflected in the Buberian philosophy, we might answer:

Hasidism started as a religious and, to a large degree, mystically-oriented revival movement among 18th century Jews in Southern Poland and the Ukraine. The Hasidim set out to revive a Judaism which, they felt, had become lifeless and rigid, concerned more with formalized ritual observance of the letter than with an understanding of its original spirit. The early Hasidim gathered around Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, who taught them to serve God with joy, in song and dance. While Judaism had traditionally almost equated piousness with learnedness, the “Besht” said that any Jew, tutored or not, can come close to God. All he needs is the right intent, an ecstatic devotion to, and a great love of, God and fellowman. *Hasidut* is, among other things, that religious inwardness which strives for the unification of man’s external and internal life. It is a pulling together of what is seemingly—but seemingly only—apart. Reaching out to God and fellowman, I actually reach into myself; or, to put it in somewhat Buberian language, reaching out to others, I reach myself.

Unification also means sanctification. One of Hasidism’s central teachings that reverberates in Buber’s entire philosophy—religious and secular—concerns the “hallowing of the profane” (“profane” to be understood as mundane, secular, pertaining to this-worldly matters). Actually, the Hasid—at least as Buber sees him—rejects the notion that there is anything profane in man’s life. Whatever appears so is merely the not-as-yet-hallowed. It is up to me so to live that I sanctify, that is, fill with the right spirit, even the most trivial undertakings. If I do, my performance of even the lowliest, the most humdrum and pedestrian task will come alive

with meaning. What is more, my every act, and with it my everyday life, will be not only meaningful in itself; it will represent my personal contribution to the betterment of the world. It will have a redemptive quality.

The Hasidic postulate for unification and sanctification, which also forms the very heart of Buber's religious thought (or, as it has lately been called, his religious secularism), is derived from a Kabbalistic myth, which relates that God, in His great love, wished to create the world. But, as the Infinite, the Limitless One, He completely filled the All. To make room for the world, He therefore withdrew Himself into Himself. This divine contraction created the possibility of an existence outside of God. The space which He had vacated contained an arrangement of vessels that were to hold the light emanating from Him. But, by some cosmic happening, the vessels broke, and the primordial light of creation spilled over. Sparks of it fell into lower spheres of being and remained there, encapsulated in all sorts of material, in constricting shells. Our earth is full of these scattered sparks. Imprisoned in their shells, they yearn to be free and to be restored to their divine source. To bring about this act of restoration, to perform this task of cosmic repair and healing, is up to me. And how do I go about it? By searching out and gathering up the dispersed sparks wherever they may be hidden. By breaking open their deadening shells so as to liberate those exiled bits of light. By performing, that is, a loving deed—my loving deed.

Looking for hidden light in even the most unlikely places and cracking the shells that encapsulate the sparks of the divine—that is what is meant by “hallowing the profane.” And it is through my sanctification of the everyday, of the earthly and occasionally even the earthy, that I stitch heaven and earth together. It is through my loving deed that I hasten the redemption of the world.

Martin Buber took this bit of Kabbalistic-Hasidic lore and interwove it intricately with the very fabric of his philosophy. The gathering up of the sparks, for instance, and the striving for unification and restoration symbolize for him not only an ingathering of life's diverse and occasionally diametrically opposed elements. They also stand for the attempt to put together the tragically broken, the alienated Humpty Dumpties of our time, to pick up the jagged pieces of our values and our hopes which litter our personal lives as well as our interpersonal relationships, be they one-to-one, group-to-group, or international.

Genuine life is united life, (and for the) perfect man . . . all that is scattered . . . and fragmentary grows together in unity; this unity is his life.

Buber recognizes no division between man's animal and spiritual nature, no dichotomy between body and soul.

Man is not a centaur (and) [The] world is not something to be overcome. It is created reality, but reality created to be hallowed.

For Buber, the material is not immaterial, and a disembodied spirituality seems to him truly ghostly. It takes heaven and earth to make a universe, and it is the task of every individual and of society, at large, to bring about this fusion of heaven and earth, this true kingdom of God.

He who divides his life between God and the world through giving the world "what is its," to save for God "what is His," denies God the service He demands . . . the hallowing of the everyday in the world and in the soul.

Yet, though our existence must not be divided into two different spheres, Buber sees all of life built on the principle of duality. Existence is not monistic. Life is grounded in a "primal twoness," a twofoldedness from which all being flows.

If the ocean had a voice, neither high tide nor low could truly say "I," but only the two of them together in the oneness of the sea.

Similarly, neither man nor woman fully represents mankind; their differences are ineradicable. But, as human beings, they synthesize within themselves, as well as together, one with the other, their polar oppositeness; thus, they emerge complete and whole. When Buber speaks of the principle of duality which underlies all existence, he does not mean a self-destructive, self-contradictory dualism. He is well aware that, by the rules of logic, concepts such as "love and justice," "freedom and order," or even "light and darkness" do contradict each other, or even rule each other out. But he asserts that they are inseparable in the reality of lived life. Life's basic twoness manifests itself not as a struggle of irreconcilable opposites, but as a composition of constitutive elements. These elements do represent a certain polarity, but it is a polarity that neither can nor ought to be overcome. It must be lived with.

In Buber's usage, polarity or polarization means creative tension. It is a tension born not of friction but of man's recognition that there are two words by which he must live: the "primary words" I and Thou. Living by those two words, or in those two modes of existence, means that if one individual encounters another, he finds, or establishes, his own identity as a person, his I. I meet you and, as I discover in you the person you are, something of fundamental significance happens to both of us: we acknowledge each other's distinctiveness or selfhood. And because I become aware of my own selfhood, I can, and indeed must, affirm the selfhood of the you who faces me, and whom I face. As self encounters self, they enter into a mutual relation: they address each other as Thou.

But though I and Thou derive their being only from standing in a mutual relation with each other, their being is not relative. I and Thou are two absolutes, and must confirm each other as such. "It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed." The essence of encounter lies in the realization that I and Thou are not extensions of each



other. They are, and must remain, distinct personalities. Though they must give freely of themselves in the mutuality of their encounter, they must never sacrifice their individuality. Self-effacement or amorphousness of character make any real encounter impossible, for, says Buber, the "reality" of a meeting is determined by the "reality" of those who meet. A real person must be secure in the knowledge of his unique value as a human being.

Being linked to another in an I-Thou encounter raises the level of man's entire existence. This link is forged by performing what Buber calls the "initial act of turning," a truly life-giving motion that propels me in the direction facing you. To meet the world, to meet the other in this world, (or the world through the other), I must turn towards both, world and man. "Only he who turns to the other human being, and opens himself to him, receives the world in him . . ."

Rather paradoxically, "distancing" or "setting at a distance" is as important an ingredient of encounter as is turning. Though the terms "relation" as well as "I and Thou" certainly suggest closeness, Buber insists that true closeness can arise in an encounter only when the partners understand and respect the need for a certain distance between them. A well-considered distance between any two human beings is needed if they are not to lose their very personhood.

There is, however, a vast difference between maintaining the distance which is the prerequisite for any real encounter, and keeping the kind of distance which forecloses any possibility of truly meeting another. Solitary man is not fully human. Our humanity is enhanced by, and we are the richer for, every "Thou" that we say. To say "Thou," however, is not the same as to love. Realistically considered, I cannot possibly love all of my fellowmen. Buber suggests that the Biblical commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18) should be understood to mean: "Love thy neighbor as one who is like yourself." That is, I am asked to recognize in my neighbor our common humanity as precondition for entering into a dialogue with him.

What is a dialogue? In the Buberian sense, a dialogue is an attitude, a mode of life; rather than a mere conversation or exchange of views, it is a "thinking-towards-another." Yet this thinking must be more than an exclusively mental or intellectual process. "We should also . . . live toward the other . . . toward his person," toward his entire being. In other words, dialogical man defines neither himself nor another in purely intellectual terms. A dialogue must take into consideration the total personalities of those who are involved in it.

Dialogical man must also know how to listen, and to listen not merely to, but for, what the other may wish to say. A real dialogue is characterized by immediacy, directness, spontaneity, non-reserve. It focusses on the common ground between the partners rather than on their differences. The components of a true dialogue are address and response; yet neither

address nor response need be verbalized. Buber feels that the I's mere existence already constitutes an address, while the Thou's mere being-there constitutes a response.

Dialogical man feels himself addressed not only by another human being, but by the world and its events. The latter do not just happen. They happen to him. The drama of history is the drama of our personal lives, and its outcome depends on what we are doing with these our lives. The meaning of history is determined not by the historian but by those who live it, who are involved in it. Dialogical man experiences the world as word and must, in turn, live his entire life in response, or as a response, to that word. And as he responds to the world in all of its manifestations, he becomes responsible for it. He responds by doing, and he responds by being, willing to be both counted and accountable. He answers, as it were, life's great roll-call by calling back, affirmatively, "Here!" This "here" may at times be no more than an inarticulate stammer. We quite literally often do not know the "right" answer. In fact, there are no ready-made answers to some of the most urgent questions that life may pose. Yet, though it be tentative and fumbling, our stammering answer will be better than none. It will represent the best possible response that we can make at this particular time and in this particular situation. And, as such, it will be adequate.

Still, even an adequate response to the address of another—whoever or whatever that other may be—furnishes us with no guarantee for the quality of our relationship. No human I-Thou relationship, not even the most constant one, can ever be taken for granted. It must continually be renewed from within. It must be kept mutual if it is not to degenerate into an I-It relationship.

What is the difference between I-Thou and I-It? An I-Thou encounter is characterized by mutuality. Subject faces subject (on the same level, as it were), as they reach out, one to the other, from the core of their being. By contradistinction, I-It is a subject-object relationship (reaching, as it were, from a higher to a lower level). Here, the subject tries to, or actually does, use, dominate or manipulate another as if he were an object. This object, in turn, is passive; it does not reciprocate. The difference between an I-Thou and an I-It attitude is the difference between involvement and detachment. It has nothing to do with the distinction between animate and inanimate beings. Men can be reduced to the state of an It, while a tree, an animal, a work of art can become a Thou.

Take the example of a tree: I can look upon it as a botanical specimen, noting its generic characteristics, age and height, or maybe wonder how much fruit it might yield. In short, looking at this tree with scientific objectivity and detachment, I regard it in the mode of "It"—hence, also, as an "It." But I can, says the philosopher of encounter, also approach that tree in the attitude of "Thou," ready not only to recognize it as a being, but to enter into its very being. I shall then feel how it feels to be a tree—the

upward thrust of its rough-barked trunk, the spread of its outreaching branches, the warmth of the sun dappling its leaves. What is more, by making the tree's inner "presence" present to myself, I vouchsafe the mutuality of our encounter. I activate whatever may be mutely present in the non-human "beings" whom I dialogically (that is, truly) "meet" by lending them "independence and, as it were, a soul." Thus, I will "hear" them as they call me "Thou."

Here arises, obviously, the question: how do I know that what Buber calls a dialogue is not merely my own, projected into an other, monologue? This "epistemological" problem of mine, however, is no problem of Buber's. We know because we live; we know as we live. Nor is he disturbed by the fact that this kind of knowledge is, and must remain, subjective. For is not all of existence, is not all of lived life, subjective?

Still, Martin Buber does agree that there is another, an objective kind of knowledge that is technical or scientific. Science is part of the It-world; yet it is indispensable. Buber does not advocate that we turn the clock back, ride in horse-drawn buggies, do without electricity, exchange our cities for Walden Pond. What he does suggest is that we not permit the It-world to swallow us up completely. "All real living is meeting." Man cannot live meaningfully in the dehumanizing atmosphere of It, bereft of all spirituality. Truly to live is to "live in the spirit." And to live in the spirit is to live with, and through, a Thou.

The totality of life, moreover, is infinitely greater than anything that science alone can ever comprehend. Lived life is beyond all systematization. The knowable cannot be reduced to the testable or weighable. Our approach to an understanding of reality must not be exclusively objective, logical, rational. It must be all these things, if our world is to function. But our approach to reality must be complemented by something else.

This something else is an awareness that

the fundamental fact of human existence is man-with-man. (And when you consider man-with-man, you see human life, dynamic, twofold, the giver and the receiver . . . completing one another in mutual contribution.

This contribution takes many forms, but, invariably, its vehicle is communication, if only by a smile or a friendly word. Even such a negligible wisp of communication can turn into communion. And a sense of communion is the embodiment of the dialogical spirit and its ultimate goal.

But communion with the other, even in, say, as lasting a relationship as a life-long friendship or marriage, must not lead to an attempt to make the other over in one's own image, to change "the other's otherness." In any real encounter, the partners' otherness must remain inviolate. This is mandatory even for antagonists, be they individuals or nations. True, ideological opponents cannot simply accept each other's views. But they can, and must, accept each other as people, and they must try to "experience the other side." To experience the other side is done most naturally

in marriage, which Buber sees as the encounter *par excellence*. Marriage exemplifies the relational nature of all being and, in a unique way, can become an instrument for attaining knowledge. Life's secrets may defy solution, but, by loving, and through their love coming to know and understand another human being, husband and wife will come to know and understand the world.

Buber's view on marriage—as, indeed, on almost everything else—has stirring religious overtones. It is by our affirmation of, and sharing in, the being of the other that we affirm, that we get a glimpse of, the being of God, that we sense His being-present to us. And it is by being answerable for one another throughout our lives that we answer “the life-long address of God.”

God's address is not only life-long but world-wide, and we shall hear it anywhere, if only we will attune ourselves to it. Every individual, as well as society at large, must become “bound up in community, turned to God.” Though not religious in any Orthodox sense of the term, Buber is a profoundly “religious” thinker for whom all of life must be infused with that “holy intent” which reaches outward and upward toward someone or something other than one's self—toward man, world and God (in that order). The Holy is not a realm set apart, something hovering untouchably beyond reality. The Holy is as real and touchable as the ground under our feet. Even the desert floor, seemingly yielding nothing but thornbushes, is redeemable and not only by a Moses. And even a thornbush can become the bearer of revelation—and not only to a Moses. Though the history-making revelatory events related in the Bible happened in the past, they, and revelation itself, must never become a thing of the past. Revelation is “everpresent in the here and now,” and any of life's multifarious manifestations can become its vehicle.

But what must we do, as individuals and collectively, to actualize the revelatory and redemptive potential of our world, this world which too often seems barren and arid? What can we do to give the body politic a soul? Society remains a lifeless construct as long as it is merely an association of individuals who live in a humanly sterile It-world. It becomes an organic structure only when we build it around the I-Thou principle. In fact, mankind's very survival depends on a reduction from the plurality of an internally unrelated composite to the singularity of a dialogically interrelated community of “human persons.” Buber sees at least a hope for such a community in the kibbuz. He considers it possible to build many such “little societies” into one large, re-structured society of nations, a “community of communities” that would be bound together in the “dynamic unity of the multiform . . . face to face with God.”

But what is to be done when “the multiform” character and ideologies of men do not permit peaceful coexistence but result in irreconcilable conflicts leading to war? Surprisingly, Buber was not an absolute pacifist. In 1939, he wrote to Gandhi:

I do not want force, but if there is no other way of preventing the evil from destroying the good, I trust I shall use force and give myself into God's hands . . .

And, nearly twenty years later, he said:

I do not believe that violence must always be answered with non-violence . . . when there is a war, it must be fought.

These would seem to be statements not of conviction but of resignation. For the philosopher of dialogue had asked again and again that not only individuals but, also, nations live not merely next to, but truly with, one another. He had been one of the leading members of *Ihud*, the organization that strove in every possible way for a unification of Arab and Jewish interests, and, for the same reason, he had joined the League of Arab and Jewish Rapprochement and Cooperation. What became of all these efforts need not be spelled out here. But it should be mentioned that Buber found himself ideologically rather isolated among his own people, especially during his later years.

This was a tragic paradox of history, for Martin Buber had been prominently associated with the Zionist movement ever since its inception. He had met Theodor Herzl already in 1898, and had entered into a close working relationship with him. But this relationship ended when Herzl's political and Buber's cultural Zionism proved incompatible. For Buber (along with Aḥad Ha-am), this movement was infinitely more than a "nationalistically" motivated endeavor to settle Jews in Palestine. For practical reasons, it certainly had to be that, too. But though a physical haven is indispensable for the uprooted Jew, it is not enough. A land of his own is mandatory in determining the Jew's fate, but it will take more than a land of his own to fulfill the Jew's destiny as Buber sees it. Their resettlement in Palestine must make of Jews what they had always been meant to be, allowing them "to become what we are," a people imbued with the profound humanity and deep spirituality of what should be their blueprint for living: the Hebrew Bible.

With a nearly prophetic zeal, therefore, Buber implores us to work not only for Zionism but on ourselves. The Jew's task is to prepare for the rebirth, not merely of a country, but of a people; to resuscitate not merely its body politic but its soul; to revive, by a renewal from within, the ancient spirit of Israel which permeates the Bible. The Jew's task is a return to Judaism's original image of God, world and man and their interrelationship. In short, the twentieth century calls for a renaissance, within Israel and without, of what Buber defines as Hebrew Humanism—a way of life that is human, humane and spiritually oriented.

"Life lived in the spirit" or "in the image of God," as he variously calls it, remains a postulate throughout Buber's writings. Yet he has no illusions about the nature of man. He recognizes the reality of evil, and even

acknowledges that all societies have their “subhuman” or “contra-human” elements. This acknowledgment, however, does not invalidate his philosophy of encounter. On the contrary, it serves to underscore it. For society’s “sub-humans” are evil, and create evil, precisely because they refuse to enter into any kind of dialogue with their fellowmen. To combat man-made (that is, social) evils and to reinstate its members as human beings, society needs no sweeping reforms, no slogan-promoted isms. All it needs, Buber believes, is the I-Thou spirit which creates community. And the place to start this community is here and now.

The here and now is also the place where man encounters God.

Meet the world with the fullness of your being, and you shall meet Him . . . [I]f you wish to believe, love!

Though every human encounter, every loving relationship is meaningful in itself, it also points beyond itself, to a greater meaning. For the very depth with which man can experience a human encounter makes him sense the existence of an absolute presence (as indicated earlier, in connection with Buber’s view on marriage). And as he realizes that it is God who has called humans into being and made them into an I, man can now turn to God, the Creator, and call Him “Thou.” God is man’s “eternal Thou” that, “by its nature, cannot become an It.” God, the Nameless and Boundless and the eminently Other is, “paradox of paradoxes,” also a Person who addresses man, and whom man can address.

God’s voice can be heard through every sound of life’s polyphony, not merely in synagogue, church or mosque. Buber takes a dim view of organized religion. True, religious systems and their institutions do offer man a certain sense of security but all too often they lack the sense of religious immediacy which marks a true encounter with one’s Eternal Thou. “The arch of the temple-dome can easily obstruct man’s view of the firmament.” The Bible does not even know the word “religion,” yet makes it perfectly clear how God wants man, His creature, and Israel, His people, to live. The Bible is God’s dialogue with Israel. It is the classical document of I and Thou.

Though no traditionalist, Buber is not opposed to tradition as such:

. . . for without law, without some clearcut and transmissible line of demarcation between what is pleasing to God and what is displeasing to Him, there can be no historical continuity of divine rule upon earth . . . (Still, though) the teaching of Judaism comes from Sinai . . . the soul of Judaism is pre-Sinaitic . . . (And though) the soul can never again be understood outside of the Law . . . the soul itself is not of the Law.

However—and this is a most weighty “however” indeed—Buber considers a religious law as binding upon him only if it says something to him personally, only if it assumes a compelling meaningfulness for him, only if it comes existentially alive for him. A revealed *command(ment)* can be



meaningfully carried out only if it is experienced as a divine *demand*, put to, and singling out, a particular individual and claiming the entire man—his mind, will and emotion. This total seizure, as it were, burdens man with an awesome responsibility: it makes him the arbiter of truth. Yet he has no choice but to walk the “narrow ridge” in “holy insecurity,” a state of mind and soul that forces him over and over again to decide what of religious tradition he can accept, and what he must reject. Even then, he will be aware that what he has decided to accept may not be *the* truth. But it will be *his* truth.

This truth constitutes the “uncertain certainty” with which “I answer for my hour.” And as each man’s hour and its task are inseparably intertwined with the hour and task of all other men, his personal decisions and actions determine, to a very real degree, the present shape of our society and the future of mankind. Through our decisions and actions, we become what Judaism asks us to be: creative partners of God. We become, within historical time, participants in creation, revelation and redemption, the three constitutive components of Jewish faith, the three manifestations of our Eternal Thou.

But what happens when our Eternal Thou does not become manifest to us? Where was our Divine Partner when we implored Him for a word, a sign, some response to our prayer, our outcry, in Auschwitz? To this agonized question, Buber has only an agonized answer, an answer given by Jewish tradition ever since Job: the Auschwitz of the gas-ovens, and all the other Auschwitzes throughout history, occur during an Eclipse of God. There seem to be truly God-forsaken times when, for reasons of His own, God hides His face (Is. 8:17; Deut. Is. 45:15). All man can do then is suffer silently, and silently wait for a new revealing. This suffering is not passive, however. It constitutes an act of faith: the faith that God will re-establish His presence to us, and that we shall once again “know” Him as Job “knew” Him—in the sense of serving as witness to God’s presence, which is encounterable ever anew.

There is more than a trace of mysticism in Buber’s religious writings, his disavowals notwithstanding. Still, he does unconditionally reject the mystic’s striving for a possible union with God. God and man can encounter each other but to encounter is not to fuse. If God and man were to become one, the principle of twoness, upon which the world rests, would be destroyed. On a different level, Buber also rejects the mystic’s religious reverie. God is not to be found in some “deified” realm. The way to God leads through the world. The “fullness of time,” in which the Bible places the coming of the Messiah and the world’s redemption, is not some distant future. The fullness of time is now. It is the fullness of life lived in relation to, and in love of, God and man. It is life lived in the spirit. It is the life of lived and living dialogue.

# *The Builder of Bridges*

ERNST SIMON\*

*Translated by David Wolf Silverman*

IT IS UNIVERSALLY CONCEDED (AND BY HIM, as well,) that praise of Buber far exceeds his influence. This lack of correspondence between praise and influence is an age-old and respectable phenomenon from which many famous men have suffered. One calls to mind quite easily Lessing's rhymed lament concerning Klopstock:

Who will not praise Klopstock?  
But will anyone read him—No!  
Better that he be praised less  
And read with greater attention.

Fifty years later, the romantic philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel called praise "an assemblage of misconstrued meanings heaped around a famous name." Søren Kierkegaard, out of personal religious conviction, preferred eternal life to temporal fame. And Franz Oppenheimer concluded the introduction to the fourth volume of his life's work with the following blistering lament directed against his critics: "As for those lordlings, I hereby abjure the present. The future is of much greater compass."

Despite these parallels, which can easily be multiplied, Buber constitutes an almost unique phenomenon—and for two essential reasons. He experienced two periods of praise, each different from the other, and, to a degree, contradicting each other; and his actual influence is widely dispersed among different nations, cultures, religions and groups which are not mutually involved with each other. Indeed, they are sometimes sharply opposed one to the other.

Buber reaped his first measure of praise soon after the publication of his earliest volumes, i.e., *Tales of Reb Nachman of Bratslav* (1906) and *Legends of the Baal Shem* (1908). In 1902, together with the late Berthold Feivel, he had already established in Berlin the publishing firm, the "Jüdische Verlag," which gave a new format to the German-Jewish book and raised it to a higher aesthetic level. However, the young author did not publish his own volumes, despite their Hasidic contents, under the

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\* From the Hebrew "*Gosher Gesharim*," MOLAD, XVI, 1958.

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ERNST SIMON, a close associate of Martin Buber, is a philosopher and educator with a distinguished career in both Germany and Israel.

aegis of that firm, but under the sponsorship of a distinguished German publisher. He indicated, thereby, that he was addressing himself not only to a Jewish readership but to the wider world. It was in this way that he was able to reach the most aesthetically sensitive Jews, viz., those whose tastes had been formed by Stefan Georg, Rilke, Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal was born four years before Buber (in 1874) and was already well-known by his twentieth year. Early fame affected them both adversely, but Buber more so than Hofmannsthal. In his early poems, as well as in the poems, "The Death of Titian" and "Sin and Death," Hofmannsthal showed himself to be a completely formed artist. His later creations, especially the play, "The Tower," equalled his earlier ones, but they did not win the critical acclaim or even the attention that they merited. The majority of slothful readers contents itself with the outer form, or even the label that is attached to a work of art, and does not exert itself to plumb its interior. The early praise of Hofmannsthal "fixed" his name forever and effectively barred many from pursuing a more profound appreciation of his literary work, which continued to rise to higher levels.

How much more was this true of Buber? Although Hofmannsthal found himself a consummate artist meriting the legitimate praise accorded him, one cannot say as much of the young Buber. Not only did he later develop by degrees, but he underwent an essential change. Most of the public, however, refused to change along with him or, at the very least, to change the image which they had already formed of him. He remained imprinted in their consciousness as a "mystic" who spoke and wrote beautifully but in a cloudy or baroque way. They thought him to be a man whose thoughts could not be fully understood, whose outstanding artistic ability permanently secured him a place, albeit unwillingly, in the realm of aesthetics alone—a realm which had no intrinsic connection to the world of action, despite his own appealing preachments to the contrary concerning the need for "realization." He sounded this call, for example, in his philosophic work, *Daniel: Conversations on Realization*, which was published in 1913. Not in vain did Buber, in his non-Hasidic writings, thrice mention the warning of Rabbi Baruch of Mezibozh, the grandson of the Besht, "Better that I should remain silent until I perfect my preaching." This warning Buber directed both against his adoring camp followers as well as himself.

*Daniel* was published during the second wave of Buber-worship which was related to his *Speeches on Judaism* (1909–1919). Henceforth, his influence proceeded from a common source, but in two different directions, and these diverged increasingly as they developed. *Daniel* concerns itself with the following topics: "intention," "existence," "meaning," "continuity" and "unity," in the context of conversations "amidst the mountains," "beyond the city," "in the garden," "after the theater," and "on the seashore"—conversations which take place between Daniel and

his wife or between Daniel and one of his friends or disciples. The form of the book is reminiscent of the philosophical dialogues of Rudolph Burkhardt, Hofmannsthal or even Herman Baer. It is filled with echoes of the elder Dilthey and Georg Simel, both of whom were Buber's teachers at the university, and with the contemporary "Philosophy of Life" (*Lebensphilosophie*), though Buber widens its scope so that, under his influence, what was later to become "existentialism" was here adumbrated.<sup>1</sup> In lyrical figures of speech we find conceptual motifs such as the decisive value of true dialogue, the confrontation between scientific orientation and personal embodiment, the continuity of life which demands the striving for unity under intense stress, and even the motif of "encompassing," which signifies the duality to be found in one participant whereby he perceives *himself and the other at one and the same time* (author's italics). This notion, destined to play a central role in Buber's later educational philosophy, is here based on the erotic relationship or is, at least, best explained by it.

This little book is suffused with cultural and literary allusions drawn from East and West. The Greco-classical and the Indian, the pagan-Scandinavian and the Christian worlds are here met and absorbed. The reader would barely sense that the author is Jewish if he were not to attend the whispered reservation sounded melodiously and objectively by the words "to the Christians." Jacob and Esau, too, are mentioned without identifying them, as a bare illustration and as an aside. In this book, Buber is seen embarking on his long journey through the world of universal human thought.

But the very same man who wrote this book had already been diligently occupied for nine years in the study of Hasidism. Prior to this he was editor of *Die Welt*, the central organ of the World Zionist Organization, and during the very years that he conceived the ideas of *Daniel* he produced his first five *Speeches on Judaism*. Did the realms inter-fuse and draw from each other?

Substantively—yes, but, generally, not in the way in which they were viewed by proponents of other views or even by those who were influenced by them in other camps. For in Buber's heart there was no gulf between the two principalities; a unity of subject matter bound *Daniel* together with the *Speeches*. The latter also were concerned with problems of decision and unification, a unity which was demanded but not conferred, and with ideas about action and the future. The profound novelty to be found in these speeches is their intensely personal, indeed, their "existential" turning to the individual Jew in order that he might make a personal decision to cleave to his people. Pinsker, Herzl, and even Aḥad Ha-am used collective notions such as "auto-emancipation" or "Jewish state" and "preparation of the heart," but it was Buber who transferred

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1. My friend, G. Scholem, pointed this out to me.

the demand implied in these three slogans to the sphere of the individual. The first *Speech* ends in the following way:

When still a little boy I read an old Jewish legend which I did not understand. It said only this: "Before the gates of Rome there sits a poor leper who waits. He is the Messiah." I then approached a wise old man and asked: "Why does he wait?" The old man gave me an answer which I did not understand until many years had passed. He said: "He waits for you."

This new note of turning to the individual Jew corresponded uniquely to the personal situation of the contemporary Jew who was assimilated, partially or completely, into Western culture. Unlike those of preceding generations, this Jew could imagine that he had a real choice between the people Israel and the general-citizenry, or, to use Buber's terminology of that period, between "his blood" and his "environment." The intermixture of these two factors would remain strong in the future, but whoever would make the right choice, viz., whoever would elect "the blood"—the lasting substance—over the "environment"—the intrusive novelty—would be converted from a slavish servitor of this cultural compound to its master. He would merit not only a new identification with his people and his homeland, to which he would now be joined voluntarily, but would also win his personal human freedom which is wraith-like unless it be embodied in a community that is both natural and chosen for each of its members.

These assertions were very powerful in their day. It was no accident that their effect was first felt in Bohemia, then in Galicia, and only afterwards became widespread in Germany. The original addressees of Buber were Jews who, like him, were Western-Eastern or Eastern-Western, i.e., who found themselves living geographically between two worlds and in opposed historical periods, between masses of traditional Jews on the one hand and a Judaism which was crumbling, between a life founded on a continuing heritage and one which was empty of all traditional contents and values. This call of a man-in-the-middle found its way to other men-in-the-middle at the right psychological and sociological moment. Organizations of these middle-men, like the student group, "Bar Kokhba," in Prague and the youth movement of Hashomer Hatzair in Galicia, became Buber's fiery hasidim. Both as groups and as individuals they were *hylic*, i.e., matter waiting to be formed. They were in the midst of three crises—the European crisis of the First World War; the Jewish crisis vis-à-vis the persecutions in Eastern Europe which, today, can be seen as relatively minor, and the attack against Jewry's very existence through conversion and intermarriage which involved the disappearance of Western Jewish communities; and the crisis of the modern individual, who finds himself devoid of reliable authority or a stable way of life. It was especially the most refined and sensitive souls who reacted seismographically to the deep tremblings in the earth. Through Buber's speeches their

uneasiness was now channeled into a creative actuality. These addresses, which contained no formal dialogue and which were delivered, in the main, without any attendant question-period, were much more “dialogical” than the literary-philosophical conversations embedded in *Daniel*. The speeches were intended for a specific and perceptible goal and their audiences responded to these missives with action. It may be that *Daniel* added to Buber’s reputation in the wider cultural world, but his actual influence began with the *Speeches on Judaism*.

## II

To the dialectic between the acclaim and the influence of Buber one may add another dialectic: not that between different areas, but one which takes place completely within the realm of influence. The best and most consistent of Buber’s auditors and readers began to speak Hebrew, to write Hebrew and to emigrate to the land of Israel, there to settle and to work. It was in this way that they understood the demand for “realization” which they had heard from his lips and whose actuality was thus mandated. But Buber himself, who energized them, neither led nor accompanied them. His former students now entered upon a new “existence,” separated from the lecture-halls and reading rooms where they had first absorbed his words. The kibbutzim, towns and cities of the land of Israel were quite different from the Western cities or Galician hamlets. And if any one of those settlers could free himself from his hard work, once again to interest himself in the words of this now-distant author who remained in the Diaspora and wrote in its tongue, he no longer could understand them as he once had, as they were first heard and first read, and he found himself alienated from the speaker and was disappointed in him. And there were those who asked, both privately or publicly: Whatever happened to the proclaimer of “realization?” Did he practice what he preached? And if not, why not?

To this piercing question, too, there is an answer—but only for one who attempts to know Buber in his entirety and is willing to comprehend his complete life work. In the period of time presently under consideration, he was at once the author of the *Speeches on Judaism* and *Daniel*. The author of the *Speeches* was, perhaps, obliged to emigrate to Israel and to join one of the kibbutzim. The author of *Daniel* was undoubtedly obliged to continue his line of thought in the privacy of his chamber until he could reach from the beginning of his lyrical existentialism to the fully fashioned philosophy of “I and Thou.” Perhaps the deliverer of the *Speeches* should have been compelled by his own explicit utterances, but the author of *Daniel* was certainly compelled by those self-same words which were still imprisoned within him and which were clamoring for articulation and form. Buber’s unreserved exaltation of A.D. Gordon—and there was no one for whom he had greater admiration before he met Franz Rosenzweig—was tinged with a smidgeon of polite envy. Gordon



fully realized his mission, because he had been “sent” for a single purpose. But, from that day to this, Buber had a dual mission—one for Israel and one for general human thought—and the two did not always dwell together in unity. Thus it was that one generation after another received torah from Buber and then abandoned him; they would stand and realize one aspect of his torah which had become—for that generation—the fullness and substitute for his complete teaching, and then they turned their backs on him because the teacher continued to go his own way and to forge ahead on his destined path.

Nevertheless, for the good fortune of both the man and the people, there was no dearth of new points of meeting. They came at times of crisis and not accidentally. In 1916, in the middle of the World War, Buber founded the magazine *Der Jude*. His introduction to the first issue ends with the following words:

In 1832, when Gabriel Riessen edited a journal on “religion and freedom of conscience,” he named it *Der Jude*. He meant the Jew as an individual, for whom he demanded civil rights. We have given our journal the same name; however, we do not signify thereby the individual Jew but the Jew as bearer of the concerns of the people and its task. We do not claim freedom of conscience for communicants of a specific religion, but freedom of life and work for the masses of a lowly folk who are today powerless targets of events, but a folk which should be the free bearer of its own destiny and activity in order that it might grow and achieve its task for humanity. To fight for that freedom is one of our watchwords; the other is to overcome the effects of self-centeredness and divisiveness which, in Judaism itself, prevent the achievement of that task. If we are discerning enough to acknowledge with deference our connection to a community; if we have been roused to a responsibility on its behalf, then we are obliged to devote everything to the purification of that community. As he is now, the Jew is not our goal, but a point of departure; we strive here for the actualization of that Jew whose noble image is emblazoned in our memories and in our hopes.

These words attest to an additional element in the Zionist-Jewish and general-humanitarian yearnings of Buber and his circle.

Almost from the very first, the influence of the new journal was greatly felt. A Jewish soldier in the German army, a convinced anti-Zionist, wrote positively and in detail to his parents, from the Balkan front, that after the first several issues of *Der Jude* it was fast becoming “the only Jewish journal of German Jewry which one could respect and which was worthy of trust.” That soldier was Franz Rosenzweig (cf. his *Briefe*, 10/10/1916).

Six annual volumes of the journal were edited by Buber himself. It was only in 1923 that he was able partially to free himself from the burden of editorial work, citing the reason that “What was commanded to me yesterday is forbidden to me today.” What happened?

For seven years, from 1916 to 1923, Buber attempted to influence the

Zionist movement. In *Der Jude* he fought for issues of principle: on its positive, although complex, relationship to the essence of Judaism as a religious *Weltanschauung*; on its organic relationship to the Jewish people, alive and creative wherever it dwelt in dispersion; on its progressive communal and political character, both anti-reactionary and anti-chauvinistic; on its appropriate setting within the geo-political sphere of the Arab nations which were arising, from a nationalist point of view, and were uniting from a territorial one. With all of the freedom of speech, views and discussion granted to its contributors by the magazine, there was a recognizable "line" advanced by it. Buber presented it both orally and in writing. In those years he often attended Zionist and Jewish assemblies. In "the days of the Jewish youth" in Berlin or in Vienna in 1918, the time of ferment after the Russian Revolution, many of us heard, and were influenced by, his saying: "Youth is humanity's hope for eternal happiness." If such was the case, then we, the young people, had a destiny and humanity had a hope and the two were really one. The influence of these simple words has not faded at all after some forty years, despite more than a few setbacks suffered by loyal Zionist followers of Buber in the very midst of Zionism's realization.

In 1920, Buber met A. D. Gordon in Prague at the International Congress of "Unity" to which he belonged as a member of *Ha-poel Ha-zair*. From that time he maintained specific organizational contact with the Zionist Labor movement.<sup>2</sup> He demanded the "socialist upbuilding of Erez Yisrael" and defended its constructive beginnings as a "revolutionary settlement" in the face of its detractors in the citizen camp. In his later work, *Paths in Utopia*, (Am Oved, 1947) he made the point that the work of the Israeli kibbutz as an "experiment had not stumbled," although he did not dare to announce that it was "an experiment that had succeeded."

Even this period of influence, the second which Buber won in the sphere of the Jewish people, had its light dimmed and its continuity cut short. This time, the cause for his short-lived influence was exactly opposite to that which affected him after the publication of the *Speeches on Judaism*. Among the reasons for the diminution of his impact at that time was a "failure" or "lack" on the side of embodiment and decisive action; now there was a "surplus" of both. I refer to Buber's stand on the Arab-Jewish question which, in terms of the opinion and sentiments of most Zionists, erred on the side of too much rather than too little. In this matter, Buber's speeches delivered at the 12th Zionist Congress in Carlsbad in 1921 are of crucial importance. At the plenary session, Buber developed his view of nationalism in general and of Jewish nationalism in particular. For him, Judaism was neither a religion akin to other religions, nor a nation akin to other nations. A mistaken idea about the first inevita-

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2. Concerning this departure, cf. the excellent book by Hans Kohn on *Martin Buber, His Work and His Times* (Hellerau: Jacob Hegner, 1930).

bly leads to individual assimilation, while error in the second breeds collective assimilation.

The truth is that ours is not less, but more, than a people; but this "plus" is bought at a considerable price. In other words: in the Diaspora it is easy to talk about a "chosen people" because the flawed and uneven conditions of *galut* existence do not require us to confront the hopes and the dangers that face a normal people. Only Erez Yisrael can do this, and it is in Israel that we will be tested. Buber's Zionism can be formulated by this paradoxical demand: to remain a chosen people under conditions of normalcy. This demand remains misunderstood and unpopular to this very day, especially in the specific area concerning the problem of our relation to the Arab nations.

Buber continued to speak in this vein on that problem in the political assembly; here we have trustworthy witnesses as to his views. The essence of his claim was that the Arabic nations were in the midst of a process of unification similar to that of the Zionist movement which was, itself, an exemplar of the process. We cannot halt it, but we may be able to direct it, either for or against us. This argument, which was prophetic at that time, fell on deaf ears; indeed, it lessened, rather than enlarged, Buber's influence.

The last Zionist Congress to which he was a delegate was the 16th, in 1929. Once again, Buber placed the question of the Arabs at the core of his addresses. But the results were no different than before. Thereafter, he retreated to a corner, politically speaking. Instead of joining one of the large political parties he became a member of the small and ineffective "Brit-Shalom." Even in the area of cultural nationalism he was not overly successful. His program for the founding of an Institute For Adult Jewish Studies (1924) as an integral part of the purely academic structure of the Hebrew University was not adopted at the time of its proposal, but the core of his thoughts on this matter was embodied in the German pedagogic movement. Once again, a tragic abyss opened between Buber's action and his influence. (This abyss was manifest once again, but in the opposite way, in the years 1933-38, when Buber lost most, but not all, of his influence on German intellectuals, yet was one of the recognized leaders of German Jewry in their courageous stand against their persecutors.)<sup>3</sup>

### III

He who had been shunted aside in his Jewish activities was now to be set on the highroad of the broader world of general culture. In Hap-penheim, where he was living, close to Frankfurt-am-Main, there had already taken place, in 1919, a general-German conference devoted to educational renaissance. Again, in 1928, the religious socialists in all of

3. Cf. my essay, "Adult Education in Nazi Germany as a Manifestation of Spiritual Rebellion," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* (London: East and West Publishers, 1956), Vol. 1.

their groupings had met there. Buber was an active and central participant on both occasions. In the third International Pedagogic Conference at nearby Heidelberg (1925), he gave his important lecture on "The Foundation of Education." In that self-same year, the uninterrupted publication of *Der Jude* was brought to a close. In 1926, Buber, together with the excommunicated Catholic priest, Josef Witig, and the Protestant theologian-physician, Viktor von Weiszacker, began to publish the important religious journal, *Die Kreatur* (The Creature). Many Christians now saw Buber as the apostle of Jewish faith, but his apostolic mission was sponsored neither by his people nor by the synagogue in any of its recognized official forms. This fact was noticed by the courageous anti-Nazi, Karl Ludwig Schmidt (January 14, 1933) who, prior to his dismissal, served as professor of Protestant theology in Bonn. The topic of discussion which he suggested to Buber was "Church, State, People and Synagogue." Buber changed his formulation to read, "Church, State, People and Judaism," and this for two reasons:

First, I do not feel myself permitted to be the spokesman of any synagogue whatever, and I take the word synagogue as less than accurate, since it does not confront the Jew in any way that makes repentance possible for him.

In this admission there is a great *novum*. All of the historic disputes between Judaism and Christianity had taken place between the "church," and the "synagogue." In general, the church imposed itself upon the synagogue, since the former approached the latter while relying upon the sword of the temporal power, while the staff of the synagogue was broken, reminiscent of the medieval statues which depicted the two religious contenders as women thus equipped. But many Christian artists, like those who were employed to fashion the cathedral gates of Strassbourg and Bamberg, depicted the vanquished synagogue as more beautiful and glorious than the conquering church. This transvaluation also found expression in one of the most beautiful lyrics of the German poet, Ernst Stadler (1883–1914), as well as in Buber's second reply to Schmidt, albeit in slightly different form.

Buber here compares the abandoned and devastated cemetery at Worms with the adjacent vaulting cathedral, and says:

I lift my glance from the helter-skelter of the cemetery to that glorious harmony and it seems to me that I have looked from Israel to that which lies above—to the church . . . I am cast down to the earth, thrown away like these stones of remembrance. But I have not been cast away by God. The cathedral remains as it is. The cemetery remains as it is. But we have not been cast away from God.

The words are witness to a most legitimately Jewish pride-humility. This, too, was the traditional stance adopted by the Judaism of the "synagogue," but the latter did not recognize either the outer or inner

beauty of the church, both of which were clearly known to Buber. Out of this clear-eyed and complete recognition he opts for the "synagogue;" nevertheless, he refuses to speak in its name, in contra-distinction to those disputants with the church who were his historic predecessors, including Franz Rosenzweig in the *Star of Redemption*. Here, perhaps, we may find one of the reasons for Buber's third wave of acclaim, i.e., that which developed among Christians.

Rosenzweig related to Christianity much less critically than did Buber. He was the first of our religious thinkers who saw it as a religious path equal in value to that of Judaism, or at least somewhat comparable to it in worth, but his words found no such echo among Christian thinkers, for he spoke in the name of the synagogue. This change of content went unnoticed by the Christian religious consciousness or was absorbed into the ancient conventional context. Not so with Buber. His polemic—not against Jesus the man—but against Pauline Christianity, is much sharper (even exaggerated, in my opinion, especially in his German book entitled *Two Ways of Faith* [1950]).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Buber's views are much more accepted by religious Christians than are those of any other loyal Jew, since he changed the accepted formula: he disputes with the church in the name of "Judaism," but it is not traditional Judaism.

Not all Christians who show a profound interest in Buber's words recognize this distinction; some, whether out of naïveté and lack of knowledge or because of the convenience of this view of this matter, take him to be the authentic representative of religious Judaism. For the Christian, confrontation with Judaism is much easier if halakhah is removed from the center to the periphery and if subtle dogmatic problems take the place which is made available. No longer do we have two divergent concrete ways of faith confronting each other, but two modes of understanding, theoretically, what faith means. In the classical religious disputes, and this includes Franz Rosenzweig's as well, Judaism remains in its destined sphere while Christianity, as a purified faith, contends with it in its character as a legal-religious entity. For Buber, however, the dispute takes place on Christian ground which is, in essence, the territory of dogmatics.

But there are Christians who are aware of Buber's deviation from traditional Judaism. The Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Baltazar, saw it and formulated it quite well. He characterizes Buber's position as that of radical reductionism which seeks to return to the origins of faith through the annihilation of every addition thereto, and which places its protagonists "beyond Jewish Orthodoxy and liberalism, beyond Eastern and Western Judaism, beyond the spirit of the synagogue or Zionism" (*M. Buber and Christianity*, 1957). The Catholic church, with all of its artistic wealth and communal power, now meets the individual. The church now

4. Cf. my essay, "Martin Buber and the Faith of Israel," *Iyyun Annual*, Adar 1940.

stands, not over against the “synagogue” and not over against “Judaism,” but confronts the individual, solitary Jew, Martin Buber. It is for precisely this reason that its representatives are so boundlessly eager to learn from the critique of one who represents no one but himself.

Karl Barth, too, does not regard Buber as a representative Jew. In one of the volumes of his *Church Dogmatics*, the leader of the dialectical school of Protestant theology deals in detail with the doctrine of “I and Thou.” He is astounded as to how this Jew, “along with Confucius, the pagan, and Feuerbach, the atheist,” could attain to a humanism of the other person without the intermediation of the God-man. The real point of reducing these three to the same common denominator takes Buber out of his chosen Jewish context and background.

In the “Afterword” to his German book, *Writings on the Dialogical Principle* (1954), Buber reviewed the history, correlatives and influence of that principle. The vast amount of material which Maurice Friedman added to Buber’s considerations in *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (1955) proves easily that Buber’s thoughts influenced and continued to influence important thinkers in many countries, primarily theologians and religious thinkers, and, to a lesser degree, philosophers and pedagogues. To the list compiled by Buber and Friedman one can add the names of many others, especially in contemporary Germany, where Buber’s influence is felt almost unconsciously and without giving him credit for it, and without due recognition of the Jewish roots of the man and his doctrine. The fact that Buber is recognizably Jewish has undoubtedly affected some Germans seeking to cleanse themselves of the offenses committed against our people by theirs, but it rarely becomes fully significant in terms of its content and value.

Buber is aware of this situation. In terms of his own consciousness, his dialogical teaching is irrevocably bound up with prophetic and Hasidic Judaism, both of which are, in his view, phenomena of the meeting between man and God and, in the light of this, of meeting between man and man. He responds, therefore, to the aforementioned astonishment of Karl Barth with these words:

The truth is, that there is no need to concentrate either on my personal doctrine or on Barth’s; there stands, rather, his understanding of the Protestant faith against my understanding of the faith of Hasidism. Theory is only a commentary on the life that is actually lived . . . I would like to show Karl Barth, how, here in Jerusalem, Hasidim display their freedom of soul to their fellows—through dance. (Barth would, indeed, be dubious as to whether a non-Christian could really be a participant in such freedom.)

It is likely that this is the only place in Buber’s writings where he unreservedly affirms a present practice of the Hasidim, as opposed to that of their luminous past. After Barth compared him to Confucius and Feuerbach, Buber finds refuge among the Hasidim. After Barth removes



his doctrine from its life-context, Buber proceeds to characterize it as a theoretical interpretation of an actual way of life. That very solitary Jew, standing alone in his individuality, now seeks support and sustenance; he can find it only in the synagogue in its organized Hasidic form. Against his will he must, there, answer "Amen."

These winding dialectical roots of Buber can be seen in his influence on Jews and non-Jews. Two communities of innocence manifest it. A professor of Catholic theology in a remote church-school said to his Jewish visitor: "That which I could not find in the *opera omnia* of Thomas Aquinas I found in the 'I and Thou' of Martin Buber." A Hasidic rabbi told his guest who was not a Hasid:

I read Buber's *Three Speeches on Judaism* in a Hungarian translation when I was fifteen years old, and I was very much influenced by them. I learned from them that my whole patrimony, which I had already appropriated to myself, had answers to general and Jewish questions which I did not know existed. In this way I learned the essential character of my answers *qua* answers. This enabled me to use them in the future for whoever would ask me questions.

These two reactions, that of the Catholic professor and that of the Hasidic *rebbe*, are characteristically different. The Christian derived from Buber an answer to the question concerning the relation of man to his fellow, which he found only in him (Buber), and thus acquired greater certainty, while the religious Jew derived the proper foundation for questions, the answers to which he had ready at hand and thus gained greater problematics. Our conclusion is: many important Christians were strengthened in their faith by recourse to Buber. The greatest among them, viz. Leopold Ragaz, the religious socialist, and Albert Schweitzer, learned from Buber to emphasize anew the Biblical-prophetic element in their Christian heritage, while irreligious Jews who were influenced by Buber did not, as a general rule, get from him the essentials of Jewish faith, unless they accepted the *mizvot*. As a general rule: religious Jews influenced by Buber are much greater *shomrei mizvot* than their teacher!

Furthermore: His influence on religious Jews was not in terms of his unique and specific religiosity. The religious Jew who was influenced by Buber did not depart from the tradition nor did he overthrow it, but observed it with greater intention. The non-aesthetic elements of his Hasidic tales were absorbed by Jews who were not completely divorced or separated from the traditional Jewish way of life, whether Hasidic or Misnagdic. The same judgment holds true for his translation of the Bible, which he began with Franz Rosenzweig, and which became one of the most important commentaries for both free-thinkers and traditionalists alike.

This situation, too, is not accidental but is mandated by our historical-spiritual existence. While still young, Buber distinguished be-

tween teaching (*Lehre*) and law (*Gesetz*). In my opinion, this distinction has no objective existence, but it is acceptable to one who observes our Jewishness from some remove. There are few men of the "Law" who can translate and bring to life the teaching of the Torah in the language of our day. Even fewer are those who speak in contemporary terms and uphold the Law. Thus, the spiritual leadership of Judaism is divided into two realms and the one-sided derivations which flourish in their inner essence are not easily revealed to all, unless it be to such gifted ones as Ha-Rav Kook on the one hand and Franz Rosenzweig on the other. Whether willingly or unwillingly, however, he who comes to strengthen but one of these pillars of Judaism *in completo*, such as the great Halakhists on one side or Martin Buber on the other, are really occupied with the building of bridges between the two realms.

# *On Mordecai M. Kaplan's Critique of Buber*

MEIR BEN-HORIN

BETWEEN BUBER AND KAPLAN, THE "IN-Between" did not unfold, but the orbits intersected, and where the overlap expands and contracts, modern Jewish religious thought carries their combined authority. In the spaces of meeting, the fluid boundaries of each are crossed, reservations stand down, the common modernity of the European and the American theologian affirm and confirm each other.

A fuller documentation and analysis of the Buber-Kaplan relationship on record exceeds the confines of the present study. But whenever the tensions between the two thinkers are considered, their harmonies need to be remarked as well. In fact, the interplay of the two—for this, the rather extensive evidence will be presented at another time—tilts in the direction of the latter, not the former. Nonetheless, the tensions are high and the disagreements substantial.

Kaplan's most elaborate critique of Buber appears in his statement "A Modern Esoteric Rationale,"<sup>1</sup> a slightly shorter version of which is presented as chapter 10, entitled "Buber's Evaluation of Philosophic Thought and Religious Tradition," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman. The point of attack is not a marginal issue, but what Kaplan regards as Buber's core, the very key to the understanding of "the quality and significance of Martin Buber's life and thought."

Kaplan opens with a rather scathing though moderately worded paragraph in which Buber is introduced as himself not professing "to be the creator of a philosophic system" but as one who has put forth "a proposal for a new method in the art of living, a method known as 'the life of dialogue.'" Buber's text, which Kaplan subjects to critical commentary, is "The Demand of the Spirit and Historical Reality," originally given by Buber as his inaugural address at The Hebrew University in 1938.

The criticism was almost thirty years in the making. In what must now be recognized as a monumental work of incalculable historical value, his unpublished *Journal*, Kaplan recorded on Tuesday, April 26, 1938 (in Hebrew):

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1. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Purpose and Meaning of Jewish Existence* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1964), pp. 255–86.

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Today I heard Buber's inaugural lecture. The subject was: "The Demand of the Spirit and the Historical Reality." He spoke about one and a half hours in polished Hebrew and with slow and strong enunciation. In my opinion, the idea which he developed has no objective or scholarly value but it has poetic and impressionistic value. Torczyner's<sup>2</sup> reaction was, "In Temple Emanu-El in New York such a sermon would have been in place."

Two weeks earlier, on April 12, 1938, Kaplan had entered the following description of his first meeting with Buber, his senior by only three years (in Hebrew):

Yesterday I visited Martin Buber. He was appointed professor of social philosophy at the same time as I was appointed to teach education. For a while he was the candidate for the teaching of education, but apparently there was opposition to him . . . because of the mystical vein in his approach to Judaism. Yet it was impossible that a place should not be found for him at the University, because he was one of the greats in our generation, even if it is not so easy to place him within the framework of conventional values.

In the course of their conversation they came to speak about *I and Thou* which had appeared in English in 1937.<sup>3</sup> Kaplan confided to his *Journal*, without indicating whether or not he had said this to Buber:

It is obvious to me that he strives to express—if only obscurely—the idea about the relation between man and his fellow man which Whitehead expressed in his book, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 111, where he says, "The concrete enduring entities are organisms, so that the plan of the whole influences the very characters of the various subordinate organisms which enter into it."<sup>4</sup>

In this passage, it should be recalled, Whitehead explains that by reason of the plan of the body as a whole, "an electron within a living body is different from an electron outside it. . . . But the principle of modification is perfectly general throughout nature and represents no property peculiar to living bodies."

Kaplan adopted this doctrine of organism which Whitehead offered as an alternative to traditional scientific materialism. More than three decades after the *Journal* entry just cited, he was to return to it and say that by "the process of organic reciprocity"

the whole affects each part and each part affects the whole. . . . Organic reciprocity operates in the atom with its electrons and protons, in the molecule with its atoms, in the crystal with its molecules, and through the chemical combinations that enter into plant and animal forms. It operates in

2. Professor Naftali Herz Tur-Sinai (Torczyner) (1877–1973), renowned Bible scholar, was Hayyim Nahman Bialik professor of Hebrew philology at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

3. Tr. by Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937).

4. In *Purpose*, p. 231, Kaplan refers to organicity as the "tendency of a *part* of a living being to interact in a direct and intensive fashion with the *whole* of the living being to which it belongs."

the solar system and in the vast constellations and galaxies. . . . Organicity gives rise to the processes of self-healing, self-correction and self-equilibrium. . . . *The cosmic processes of organicity . . . are the source of the Godhood or the superpersonal force in man.*<sup>5</sup>

In man, organicity functions as “a sense of responsibility” which emanates from “the organic to the group” to which he belongs.

The organicity doctrine is one of the cornerstones of Kaplan’s trans-naturalist theology. His conception of “cosmic support” for the efforts of man to achieve individual self-fulfillment, ethical nationhood, and human salvation is grounded in it. It is central to his teaching about the correlativity of God and salvation.<sup>6</sup>

The point is that Kaplan associates himself, via Whitehead, with Buber on an issue which is of primary importance to his own position. Beyond a pervasive irritation over Buber’s penchant for “deep” obscurity, Kaplan, in the passages adduced in the preceding paragraphs, appears to be saying that what to Buber is the I-and-Thou relation, is to him the organicist God-salvation correlativity.

Striking difference in language notwithstanding, the Kaplan adaptation of Whitehead is almost indistinguishable from Buber’s adaptation of hasidic teaching or, better, Buber’s teaching in hasidic disguise. What Buber has to say about “love of God and love of neighbor” in Book VI of *Hasidism and Modern Man*, approaches correlativity, the heart of trans-naturalism. Love for human beings is regarded as “the foundation”<sup>7</sup> for the love of God: The “holy Yehudi” once told a merchant who came to complain about a competitor:

“Why do you attach yourself so to the business by which you nourish yourself? What really matters is to pray to Him who nourishes and preserves you! But perhaps you do not know where He dwells; now then, it is written, ‘Love thy fellow as one like yourself, I am the Lord.’ Only love him, your fellow, and wish that he too may have what he needs,—there, in this love, you will find the Lord.”

Buber’s on-the-spot comment erupts in praise of hasidism even above the Hebrew Bible itself:

While elsewhere in the Scriptures one is commanded to love God and then the stranger because God loves him, here the converse way is indicated. Certainly both together are the truth: for each of the two loves in its truth demands the other for its completion and helps the other along. . . .<sup>8</sup>

This may well be Buber’s way of saying “correlativity of God and salva-

5. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 79.

6. See Meir Ben-Horin, “Correlativity in Mordecai M. Kaplan’s Theology,” *CCAR Journal*, XXIII, 3 (Summer 1976): 25–37.

7. Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man* (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 237.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

tion." When, two pages later, he reports that, in reply to a man's question about a prescription for the love of God, a *zaddik* said, "'the prescription for acquiring the love of God is love for Israel,'" the underlying faith can only be what Kaplan calls "correlativity." This holds true for still another comment by Buber on a statement by Rabbi Joseph of Olesk, "one of the most serious Hasidic thinkers," that "Redemption depends on the unification of the human world, for this unification is the unification of the divine substance that has been cast into the world."<sup>9</sup> On the other side of the mystical cloud one cannot fail to perceive the correlativity of God and salvation in this peculiarly Buberian idiom:

A God who so truly takes part in the destiny of His creation that He separates Himself from His *Shekina* for its sake and makes the reunification with it dependent upon the unification of creation, cannot tolerate—so teaches Hasidism—that in his life and actions man should make a fundamental distinction between above and below.<sup>10</sup>

The fact is that religious thiswordliness pervades and characterizes both Kaplan's and Buber's thought. The Jesuit scholar, Donald J. Moore, has done well in naming Buber a "prophet of religious secularism," a designation which his study documents with remarkable comprehensiveness and comprehension.<sup>11</sup> One of the main sources of annoyance for Kaplan and "correlativists" and a main reason for admiration and celebration by I-Thou dialogueans, is Buber's predilection for the mysterious-sounding noun or verb or preposition and the allusion to divine mystery which has "presence" and "encounters" or "accosts" man "in essential relationship" in the "between." Yet, up to a point, they hold in common a fundamental religious secularism or trans-secularism, a naturalism which can honestly believe God to be no illusion.<sup>12</sup>

Against the background of ambivalence, Kaplan's critique of Buber's inaugural lecture stands out all the more clearly. In embarking upon his new career as a Hebrew University professor, Buber drew a sharp contrast between Plato as representative of philosophy and Isaiah as spokesman for the Jewish tradition. He advised his immediate and larger audience that, in the enterprise of rebuilding their land and their people, modern Jews should not look to Western philosophy for inspiration but to their religious or, rather, Biblical heritage.

9. Ibid., p. 241.

10. Ibid., p. 242.

11. Donald J. Moore, *Martin Buber, Prophet of Religious Secularism* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1974).

12. This is why I cannot agree with Eugene B. Borowitz who, in his essay, "Two Modern Approaches to God" (*Jewish Heritage Reader*, selected, with Intr. by Rabbi Morris Adler [New York: Taplinger, 1965], pp. 103–110), avers that Buber's point of view is "diametrically opposed" to Kaplan's and that "Kaplan and his followers have found it possible to pray in a personally felt way to a God Who, by definition, does not hear prayer but does act in man as in nature" (p. 105). What, I ask, does prayer-hearing mean other than action that redeems? There are points of difference between Kaplan and Buber, to be sure, but "diametric opposition" is an overstatement for the two Jewish prophets of "religious secularism" in our time.



"How can the spirit," asks Buber, "influence the transformation of social reality?"<sup>13</sup> Plato held that both spirit and power are in man's possession. Yet his attempt at founding, in Syracuse, a republic in accordance with his concepts ended in failure. Kant, in *On Eternal Peace*, had shown the absurdity of the Platonic idea that the spirit's republic is governed either by rulers who are educated to be philosophers or by philosophers who are educated to be rulers. Power, for Kant, inevitably corrupts the spirit. Rulers, instead of silencing philosophers, should hear them. Perhaps because of the career of the Church in history, Kant had become disillusioned with the spirit's ability to achieve power, and he was disappointed with its ability to remain pure when in power. Does, then, Plato's "glorious failure" mean that, in the face of power, the spirit is always helpless? Without answering directly, Buber proceeds to another type of failure which, in truth, is no failure at all.<sup>14</sup>

Isaiah enters the presentation. The prophet in Israel does not believe that spirit and power are entrusted to the hands of man. Rather, spirit "invades and seizes" man, and power, when abused, destroys him. Knowing that failure is on its way, Isaiah is free of disappointment with the spirit. Realizing that he is powerless, he calls the powerful to account. Nor does he regard himself as perfect. On the contrary, he feels that uncleanness taints his life. Not justice and the just state, but the Throne and the majesty of God are before his mind's eye. "He had no idea; he had only a message. He had no institution to establish; he had only a proclamation in the nature of criticism and demand." His "criticism and demand"—like Buber's own "criticism and demand" near the conclusion of his lecture,<sup>15</sup> whereby he placed himself, despite *pro forma* denial, in the line of the prophets—aim at the creation of "a true people" whose King is God and "a community where all members are ruled by honesty without compulsion, kindness without hypocrisy, and the brotherliness of those who are passionately devoted to their divine leader." Social inequality cannot be a sign of a true people. However, to Isaiah this is not a matter of institutions so much as of "you and me, because without you and me the most glorious institution becomes a lie." Furthermore, in its relations with other nations, Israel should not rely on treaties or on world powers but on its faithfulness to the divine King. Buber advises modern Israel to follow Isaiah (or Isaiah-Buber) because, hemmed in between the great powers, "the only political chance" that a small people has lies in "the metapolitical chance" to which Isaiah pointed in addressing King Ahaz (Isa. 7:4; 30:15), of establishing the Lord's house "on the reality of true community life."

13. Cited from "Plato and Isaiah," tr. by Olga Marx, in *Israel and the World—Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken, 1948), pp. 103–12. The address is given in full in Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 177–91.

14. Nor, on second thought, is Plato's spirit. Although never realized in history, the ideal of the just state has never ceased to sting the conscience of man. What else can be meant by Buber's phrase, "this glorious failure"?

15. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, p. 190.

Isaiah failed; yet his failure differs from Plato's. To the difference the Jewish people's ongoing existence is a testimony. Jewry lives because it took seriously what Isaiah announced to Ahaz on "the highway of the fuller's field," namely: "Take heed and *keep still*" (*ve-hashqet*) and, elsewhere, two decades later: "Thus hath YHVH, the Holy One of Israel, spoken: In turning away and in rest you will be saved, in *keeping still* and in confidence will be your strength." More than a decade after the inaugural lecture, Buber returned to this theme in *The Prophetic Faith* (1949), calling it "theopolitics" and maintaining that, if the order of right community life is established, "*keeping still* [Buber's emphasis here and in the translation he offers] lends the people a downright magnetic power." In Isaiah 18:4, God Himself says, "I keep still," while in 32:17 the prophet foresees righteousness dwelling in Israel's land "and its working shall be '*keeping still* and confidence for ever.'" These four verses in which Isaiah uses the verb "to keep still" form, in Buber's fuller treatment of the inaugural lecture theme, "the core of his theopolitical teaching. . . . 'Keeping still' is holiness in regard to the political attitude of God and His people."<sup>16</sup>

The Hebrew prophet, in the words of the inaugural lecture, "does not confront man with a generally valid image of perfection, with a Pantopia or Utopia. . . . In his work of realization he is bound to the *topos*, to this place, to this people, because it is the people who must make the *beginning*."<sup>17</sup> The prophet may fail in one hour in history, but not so far as the future of his people is concerned. For his people preserves his message as something which will be realized at another hour, under other conditions, and "in other forms."<sup>18</sup>

In Kaplan's formulation,

. . . the key-idea to Martin Buber's writing . . . is the idea that the Jews have what to live for as a People. Western civilization has produced philosophers, but the Jews have had their prophets. Western civilization excels in the discoveries of science and the inventions of technology, but it has little to offer in the way of helping man achieve his human destiny. Judaism has not contributed to science or technology, but mankind cannot achieve unity and peace without the divine message which is embodied in the Jewish religious tradition.<sup>19</sup>

### Adducing Buber's essay on "The Love of God and the Idea of Deity"

16. Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper, 1960 [1949]), p. 136.

17. "Plato and Isaiah," pp. 111 ff.

18. Buber is not consistent in his rejection of Plato in favor of the Hebrew prophets. In his early lecture on "*Die Erneuerung des Judentums*" (On the Renewal of Judaism), he considers modern socialism as belonging to Judaism's "absolute life," that is, the life that aims at "the redemption of the human spirit and the salvation of the world." This socialism has two wellsprings: Plato and the Hebrew prophets. "And when Jews stepped out of the ghetto and entered the life of the peoples, both wellsprings flowed in them together to become the teaching and the apostolate of modern socialism" (*Drei Reden über das Judentum* [Three Addresses on Judaism] (Frankfurt am Main, 1916 [1911], p. 11 (my tr.)). In this passage Plato is unequivocally coequal with Isaiah.

19. *Purpose*, p. 255.

in *Israel and the World*, Kaplan fortifies his argument with Buber's reference to Pascal's exclamation, "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob—not of the philosophers and scholars." As Kaplan interprets Buber's intent, Jews do not have to depend for their spiritual fulfillment on the philosophic thinking of Western civilization. Rather, it is their opportunity and responsibility "to bring to mankind the only truth concerning God that can transform mankind." This truth is

the awareness that God is not a mere idea of the mind, but an infinite and absolute reality that exists independently of it, and salvation depends upon man's self-commitment with his entire being in thought, feeling and action to faith in this living God.<sup>20</sup>

In the Land of Israel, the Jewish people is duty-bound to translate this truth into a life which in all its facets would be permeated "by the revelational spirit that prevailed during Bible days, and that was temporarily revived in the Hasidic movement."

To remove all doubt, Kaplan goes on to contrast Buber's thesis with its antithesis which was worked out by Hermann Cohen. Unlike Buber, who returned to Judaism by way of Zionism, Cohen came back through Kantianism. For both, the heart of Judaism is the belief in God. But, for Cohen, "the belief in God is the belief in the validity of the idea," while, for Buber, it is something quite different. In "The Love of God and the Idea of Deity," Buber, in fact, confronts and rejects the position taken by Cohen who, as Buber charges, "has constructed the last home for the God of the philosophers." Buber's ensuing argument revolves around the issue of the love of God. Cohen had taught that one cannot love anything other than an idea. Buber countered that while this is true, it is also true that the idea cannot be conceived as loving in return. Now Kaplan joins this exchange on the side of Buber who, in his view, here upholds Buber's own—and Kaplan's—principle "that concreteness is the only gate to reality."<sup>21</sup> However, Kaplan diverts the discussion from the notion of God as loving as against the idea as not loving. Instead, he suggests that the controversy between Buber and Cohen is best understood as a reflection of the actual situation in which those men found themselves. Buber believed that authentic religion required the Jews to become a nation again in Erez Yisrael. In Cohen's view, on the other hand, authentic religion demands that the Jews should retain their religious community but otherwise should "become integrated into the State of which they are citizens." Kaplan accepted Zionism, as did Buber, and, at the same time, he taught "living in two civilizations"<sup>22</sup> as well as rebuilding vigorous Jewish communities in the diaspora. In fact, he went as far as to ask, in the

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 257.

22. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (New York: Schocken, 1967 [1934]), p. 324; *The Future of the American Jew* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 95–105.

context of defending the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and, specifically, Hermann Cohen: Does that suggest "being less creative than Rav and Abaya [sic]?" Does our belief in the indispensability of Erez Yisrael "require our despairing of the possibility of creative Jewish life *outside* Erez Yisrael?"<sup>23</sup>

Kaplan finds Buber's "most sustained argument" against philosophy in the essay, "What Is Man?"<sup>24</sup> But he confines himself to a rather incomplete summary of Buber's closely argued and, at times, brilliantly formulated eighty-page analysis of philosophers and theologians, from Aristotle to Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Max Scheler, in which one is at a loss to read an argument against philosophy as such. The essay is, actually, a critique of philosophical anthropology which fails to see "the wholeness of man"<sup>25</sup> in "the fundamental fact of human existence," namely, "man with man." It is with this reality that "the philosophical science of man" should begin. For this science "the central subject . . . is neither the individual nor the collective but man with man."<sup>26</sup>

From his own reading of this study by Buber, Kaplan derives the "inevitable conclusion which Buber would have us draw from the foregoing analysis of philosophic thought." But, perhaps somewhat uneasy about the inevitability of this conclusion or about Buber's wish that we draw it, Kaplan turns to Buber's "Hebrew Humanism," "National Education," "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," and other essays, most of which appear in *Israel and the World*.

Passage after passage is cited to show that Buber "prefers to regard himself as standing on the shoulders of the Jewish religious tradition and seeing beyond it rather than standing on the shoulders of philosophic thought and seeing beyond it." This implies the notion of a self-enclosed mind, on the one hand, and of a world completely outside of it, on the other. From the standpoint of those concerned with human salvation, Buber's position is "misleading." Moreover, it implies an inner contradiction in Buber who claims to have found a third alternative to tradition and philosophy and, at the same time, seems "to consider the Jewish religious tradition as self-sufficient, as capable of answering the needs of every new situation as it arises, without any recourse whatever to philosophic thinking."

Kaplan has no difficulty in showing that Buber has overstated the case. Buber himself does not accept "the tradition" in its entirety (for example, bodily resurrection, reward and punishment in the hereafter). His qualifications of the religious tradition themselves show the influence of the philosophic tradition.

23. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1956), p. 398.

24. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1965 [1947]), pp. 118–208.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

But more is involved in this argument that Kaplan makes. Without saying it in so many words, Kaplan here actually defends his own life's work of "reconstruction," which is the reinterpretation of fundamental Biblical and Rabbinic affirmations about God and the universe in the light of philosophic traditions and modern science and embodied in the philosophy of American pragmatists. This, it seems to me, is the reason why he singles out the issue of Buber's attitude toward "philosophic thought itself"<sup>27</sup> and the superiority, or even untouchability, that Buber assigns to ancient Israel's "primordial spirit" to which the Jewish people should "return." Kaplan quotes from "Hebrew Humanism" and other essays to document the point of his critique: Buber removes from man's pursuit of critical intelligence precisely those elements of the Hebrew Bible which, to Kaplan, are in greatest need of re-interpretation by man's critical and creative mind. In Buber's words, which Kaplan italicizes to emphasize his basic disagreement:

*"The Book still lies before us, and the voice speaks forth from it as on the first day. But we must not dictate what it should and should not tell us" or, "The Bible has given . . . decisive expression to an ever-recurrent happening. In the infinite language of events and situations . . . , transcendence speaks to our hearts at the essential moments of personal life."*<sup>28</sup>

It is precisely to this mysterious "voice" on which Buber does not want moderns to impose their own insights that Kaplan does not wish to "return" unconditionally, as one who, as Buber might say, is "addressed" or "commanded." This kind of revelation, whether omitted from adjacent heavens or outer reaches of time-space or the natural immanence or the dialogic "in-between," is exactly what the understanding of man and nature that is called "modern"<sup>29</sup> relegates to the history of ideas because it holds its basic assumption untenable and obsolete: that there is an extra-natural center or source of wisdom with which man, yearning to be wise, should merge his own, to whose towering, overwhelming, infinite superiority he should submit in "whole-being" openness. With all his turning-away from mysticism as the desire of man to surrender his self to the Universal Self or Absolute Self<sup>30</sup> and his adoption of the I-You

27. *Purpose*, p. 268.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 263.

29. Mordecai Bar-On, "*Ha-Mizvah ve-ha-meza'aveh*" (The Commandment and the Commander), *Petaḥim*, 36, 3 (June 1976): 6-16 (English tr., "The Commandments and the Commander," *Reconstructionist*, XLIII 7, [October 1977], and the two succeeding issues), presents such a "modern understanding" with unusual skill and ability.

30. See, Mary Whiton Calkins, "The Philosophical Credo of an Absolutistic Personalist," in George P. Adams and William P. Montague, eds., *Contemporary American Philosophy*, (New York: Macmillan, 1930), Vol. I, pp. 200 ff. In her *The Persistent Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 5th ed., 1929), she explains "Absolute" to mean "unlimited by anything external to oneself" (p. 455), and "absolute self" is a "self" because it experiences "what every finite self experiences" and more (pp. 458 f.); it shares in human suffering; it is good (p. 463).

relationship, Buber nonetheless retains the faith in God whom the philosopher calls "the Absolute," "the mystery of being," "the Other,"<sup>31</sup> "the actuality which rises above . . . the idea of God, that masterpiece of man's construction which is only the image of images," "the Beloved" who has "existence" and "living presence."<sup>32</sup>

Buber's position is, therefore, correctly identified as mysticism, qualified by the adjective "realist," which means that it does not seek man's redemption from the world but which hopes for the redemption of the world itself, God's creation.<sup>33</sup> For, as Maurice Friedman put it:

Most of the ideas which appear in the early periods of Buber's thought are not really discarded in the later but are preserved in changed form. Thus Buber's existentialism retains much of his mysticism, and his dialogical philosophy in turn includes important mystical and existential elements.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of changes in his philosophy, Buber "never forsakes his belief in . . . the duality of a God who is real in Himself yet must be realized in the world through man's life." He walked

the narrow ridge between the mystic and the non-mystic, between one who asserts unity with the ground of being and the other who either removes God into transcendence beyond direct relation or limits Him to objective "personal" existence.<sup>35</sup>

The problem for Kaplan and those for whom his transnaturalism shows the way out of their supernaturalist or naturalist perplexities is what occurs when Buber walks the not-so-narrow ridge between the supernaturalist and the transnaturalist. The former may experience or acknowledge God as loving or awesome, even terrible, or as all of these in unmitigated, ultimate incomprehensibility. The latter may speak of Him as salvation-working Power or Process or, as I do, the Promise of Existence which embraces personhood and all manner of processes which, ultimately, are not incomprehensible but inexhaustible. Buber is consistently on the side of those on the ridge who accept God as one who can be loved and who loves in response, one who can be addressed and addresses in return or who initiates love and address, one who is Eternal You to man's temporal I.

In 1950, Buber insisted that "real myth is the expression, not of an imaginative state of mind or of mere feeling, but of a real meeting of two Realities."<sup>36</sup> In *I and Thou* he confessed the very hoary faith in God as

31. *Between Man and Man*, pp. 178 f., 205.

32. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper, 1957 [1952]), p. 62.

33. M.A. Beek and J. Sperna Weiland, *Martin Buber, Personalist & Prophet* (New York: Newman Press, 1968 [1964]), p. 71.

34. Maurice S. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (New York: Harper, 1955, 1960), p. 27.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 226.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 231.



mystery which makes itself visible in either mighty acts before which, say, Job abases himself and repents in dust and ashes (Job 42:6), or in ordinary acts of, say, securing justice for the orphan and the widow and loving the stranger, giving him food and clothing (Deut. 10:18). In Buber's words,

Of course God is "the wholly Other"; but He is also the wholly Same: the wholly present. Of course, he is the *mysterium tremendum* that appears and overwhelms; but he is also the mystery of the obvious [*das Selbstverständliche*] that is closer to me than my own I.<sup>37</sup>

Buber is farthest removed from Kaplan's transnaturalism—as it were, on the opposite end of the ridge—in his essay "The Love of God and the Idea of Deity" which Kaplan cites, as indicated earlier, in his critique of the inaugural lecture. But he soon passes on to other Buber works. However, a second look at the essay might disclose Kaplan's inclination toward moderation in polemical confrontation—to the point of leaving an opponent's exposed flank unattended and exposing himself to easy refutation.

In his critical analysis of Hermann Cohen, Buber's concern in the essay is to show that God "is more exalted even than the ideal sphere." Hence, Job should not have despaired "because God and the moral ideal seem diverse to him." Buber follows through with a passage which, perhaps second to none, separates him and Kaplan and which, I submit, is at the root of the rejection of Platonic or Western philosophy:

[God] issues forth the ideal, but does not exhaust himself in issuing. The unity of God is not the Good; it is the Supergood. God desires that men should follow His revelation, yet at the same time He wishes to be accepted and loved in His deepest concealment. He who loves God loves the ideal and loves God more than the ideal. He knows himself to be loved by God, not by the ideal, not by an idea, but even by Him whom ideality cannot grasp, namely, by that *absolute personality* we call God.<sup>38</sup>

Is it correct to say, therefore, that God is a personality? Buber's answer strains under his reluctance to invoke the no-answer which is "mystery" or expose himself, as did Heschel, to unabashed anthropomorphism. Hence, for "mystery" he substitutes "paradox" and the "so to speak" to give the remaining personalism an almost open plasticity. But he does not equivocate on either the act of loving or on the act of creating as a matter of deliberate intervention:

The absolute character of His personality, that paradox of paradoxes, prohibits any such statement [that He is personality]. It only means that God loves as a personality and that He wishes to be loved like a personality. And if He was not a person in Himself, He, so to speak, became one in creating

37. *I and Thou*, Smith tr., p. 79; Kaufman tr., p. 127; Friedman, *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

38. *Israel and the World*, p. 63.

Man, in order to love man and be loved by him—in order to love me and be loved by me.<sup>39</sup>

Although the medieval notion of special providence for the individual, affirmed by, say, Joseph Albo in his popular *Iqqarim*, is avoided, even special love for individual persons is postulated with uncompromising rigor.

The difficulties, from the standpoint of Kaplanian theology, are very serious. Rabbi Harold S. Schulweis, one of Kaplan's most distinguished disciples, has formulated them in "Buber's Broken Dialogue,"<sup>40</sup> which takes up Buber's refutation of Cohen as well as Buber's postscript to the second edition of *I and Thou*, where the classification of God as a Person is defended.

In the critic's judgment, "Buber confuses the reality of a personal experience with the experience of a real Person. The intensity of a relationship which affects one personally is neither proof nor witness to the personality of others." Such an ascription of personality and claim to a two-way relationship "on grounds of truly intense, personal experience is logically illicit and morally open to all kinds of dangers." Buber, according to Schulweis, oscillates between his "torn commitments to both a moral and supramoral idea of divine personality." He was haunted by Auschwitz and sought "to hide the moral ideal behind the hidden God of Absolute Personality." He contended "that the philosopher's idea of the Absolute dissolves at the point where the absolute is loved." This Schulweis counters with the conviction that Buber's "own idea of the divine personality dissolves at the point where it is no longer lovable, at the point where Auschwitz appears." It is, to Schulweis, "a costly strategy for religion" to exclude the moral ideal and "the legitimacy of any moral critique of God" by attaching the word "supra" to His goodness and by accentuating the mystery—or absoluteness—of His personality. By casting the shroud of incomprehensibility upon God, Buber, along with other personalistic theologians, separates the I from the Thou "and morality from faith."<sup>41</sup>

As indicated, Kaplan's critique does not address this point. That his silence implies acquiescence—Isaiah/Buber might say, "keeping still"—would be a mistaken assumption. Perhaps the reason that I have suggested above is valid. Perhaps still more plausible is the idea that more

39. Ibid.

40. *Reconstructionist*, XXXVIII, 9 (December 1972): 7–12.

41. My own more impetuous critique of Buber's "Supergood" in "Martin Buber's 'Absolute Personality,'" *JUDAISM*, 6, 1 (Winter 1957): 22–30, expressed outright revulsion over the attempt to make palatable, even after Auschwitz-Birkenau, concrete inter-human evil "through the use of the preposition *super* and the wielding of the omniplastic adjective *absolute*." What I called "Right or Wrong—my Supergood!" seemed an intellectual and religious abomination. With all our being as Jews we ought to know that Abraham abandoned supergoddism when he did not sacrifice Isaac on its altar.—On Abraham's discovery of the *theoclastic* God, see my "The Striking of the Stones—A Modern Passover Midrash," *JUDAISM* 8, 2 (Spring 1959): 162ff.

comprehensive and more fundamental is Buber's alienation, however circumscribed, from philosophy or from the checks and balances of critical intelligence which alone can keep the "supra" from performing a Nietzschean leap beyond good and evil, the absolute from corrupting absolutely.<sup>42</sup>

When pressed on this front, Buber does not continue to raise the shield of the "paradox of paradoxes" or of Him who became a Person by creating a person. Instead, he presents himself as one who, in effect, upholds the deepest conviction of American pragmatists—the reliance on man's creative and critical intelligence in matters of supreme significance for human conduct and faith. He used his reply to Kaplan to give renewed emphasis to something which sustained reading of his works cannot fail to make clear: "I have not been able to accept either the Bible or Hasidism as a whole." Throughout, Buber has interpreted in accordance with his own personal perception or decision. This is true of his existentialist reading of Hasidism which, from the standpoint of objective scholarship, is grossly distortive, fictitious and not, as Scholem has it, "rooted in texts" but drawn from Buber's "own modern philosophy of religious anarchism." Indeed, "the actual phenomenon of Hasidism, both in its grandeur and its decay (which in many ways are bound together)" is not caught in Buber's presentation of it.<sup>43</sup> In the words of Buber's reply to Kaplan: ". . . I had to and I have to distinguish between that which had become evident to me out of my experience as truth and that which had not become evident to me out of my experience."<sup>44</sup>

The implication is that, along with Job in Kallen's reading of Job 13:15,<sup>45</sup> Buber apparently "maintains his ways" even before "Absolute

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42. See Meir Ben-Horin, "Toward the Dawn of History," *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought*, presented in honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron, ed. by Joseph L. Blau, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 48: "the Absolute powers all corruption and corrupts all power."

43. Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Hasidism," *Commentary*, 32, 4 (October 1961): 305–16; also in Scholem, *Devarim be-Go* (Explications and Implications) (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), pp. 361–82.

44. P.A. Schilpp and M. Friedman, eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Press, 1967), p. 744. In "The Question of the Single One" Buber's religious anarchism breaks through in the ringing declaration that, in the face of experiencing "what God desires of me for this hour," he answers with his "choice and decision and action." And "no programme, no tactical resolution, no command can tell me how I, as I decide, have to do justice to my group before the Face of God." Bluntly, "the relation of faith is no book of rules, which can be looked up to discover what is to be done now, in this very hour" (*Between Man*, p. 68). Evidentiary is also Buber's answer to Emil L. Fackenheim: "I have no teaching. I only point to something. . . . I have no teaching, but I carry on a conversation" (*The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, pp. 292; 693). On the content of revelation, see also Marvin Fox, "Some Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy," *Ibid.*, pp. 159ff. and Buber's reply, *Ibid.*, pp. 699f.: He who "is tormented by the all-too-human character" of man's share in revelation can only hold "his soul open" to the whole tradition and decide what is bidden by God and what is not.

45. Horace M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959 [1918]), p. 109: "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope. Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him."

Personality." For what "is evident" to him, must surely carry reliable evidence, which is something radically different from merely individualistic whim or fancy.

Yet this commitment to experience and evidence does not silence Kaplan's challenge. The issue is precisely the evidence's evidence or warrant and the canons of its determination.

The issue is surely not subsumed under "objectivity" and "subjectivity." But it may be pointed to by the terms "poetic imagery" and scientific conclusion, always open to examination, refutation, and correction. On Kaplan's side, not a personalized Absolute is the language in which modern man can speak of the divine but the thinking and the doing of redemptive acts. And "redemptive" refers to the quality of human life as perceived and felt by the most insightful of human kind and its suffering, yearning, and groping multitudes.

But here, again, the life of dialogue and transnaturalist reconstruction flow together.

# *The Mysticism of Martin Buber: An Essay On Methodology*

WILLIAM E. KAUFMAN

THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH of Martin Buber is an appropriate time to re-examine the development of his thought. In this essay, I shall show how his conception of, and attitudes toward, mysticism furnish a way of understanding some aspects of his philosophical development as a religious thinker. Further, I shall demonstrate how an investigation of the mysticism of Buber offers an insight into the methodology required for a study of mystical experience.

## I

Some of the leading interpreters of Buber's thought differ on the role of mysticism in his intellectual development. Nahum N. Glatzer emphatically contends that it was an early phase in Buber's development which he radically overcame:

It is true that early in his career Buber went through a mystical phase, in which a feeling of exaltation over the awareness of a universal unity of being stands over and above life in this world. In this phase simple everyday life appears to obscure that which the mystic considers to be true life, a higher life elevated above earthly existence. But Buber radically overcame this early phase and, if anything, became an anti-mystic: a man committed to the everyday, a man who believes that it is precisely in this earthly existence that the Thou is to be met; that the mystical realm is an escape from human responsibility; that response is possible only in the here and now.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast to Glatzer, Maurice Friedman claims that Buber never abandoned mysticism, but, rather, that mysticism is preserved in changed form in Buber's later development. He dates the statement of Buber's mature philosophy as 1922; *I and Thou* first appeared in 1923. Here is Friedman's analysis:

The development of Buber's thought from his earliest essays in 1900 to the statement of his mature philosophy in 1922 can best be understood as a gradual movement from an early period of mysticism through a middle

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1. Martin Buber, *The Way of Response*, selections from his writings edited by N. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), editor's preface, p. 13.

2. Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 27.

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period of existentialism to a final period of developing dialogical philosophy. Most of the ideas which appear in the early periods are not really discarded in the later but are preserved in changed form. Thus Buber's existentialism retains much of his mysticism, and his dialogical philosophy in turn includes important mystical and existential elements.<sup>2</sup>

As against both Glatzer and Friedman, Gershom Scholem stresses the continuity, rather than the development, and he considers mysticism to be the constant, unchanging element in the religious thought. According to him, Buber's book, *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization* (1913) "constituted a philosophical justification of the cult of living experience, *Erlebnis*, completely under the sway of mysticism."<sup>3</sup> Scholem sees the later dialogical philosophy as merely a transposition, in different terms, of his mysticism:

In Buber's later years, this mystical philosophy of *Erlebnis* turned into the one of the life of dialogue, the key words of which appeared ten years after *Daniel* . . . His empirical descriptions of his own concrete I-Thou experiences, such as his contemplation of a tree or his gazing into the eyes of his pet cat are, it seems to me, to be understood as nothing other than descriptions of mystical experiences.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Scholem views Buber's definition of revelation in *I and Thou* as a purely mystical one, indicating that Buber never left the sphere of mysticism. In *I and Thou*, Buber says: "Man receives, and he receives not a specific content, but a Presence, a Presence as Power . . . This is the eternal revelation that is present here and now."<sup>5</sup> Commenting on this definition of revelation as a pure encounter with God in which nothing can be expressed, formulated and defined, Scholem writes: "This definition of Buber is, as must be stated candidly, a purely mystical definition of revelation."<sup>6</sup> The concept of a pure encounter with God in the here and now, as opposed to historical revelation, with specific content or commandment, is another indication for Scholem of the mystical character of Buber's mature philosophy.

The issue is thus joined. Did Buber really transcend mysticism in his mature religious philosophy? More precisely, is his development as a religious thinker a development of mysticism or a movement away from it?

## II

The examination of the problem of Buber's mysticism calls for a clear definition of the term. But it is obvious that Buber's interpreters have different conceptions of mysticism in general and of his in particular.

3. Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, edited by Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 148.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

5. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 110, 111.

6. Scholem, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.



According to Glatzer, mysticism connotes a feeling of exaltation at the awareness of a universal unity of being, over and above life in this world. In this view, the true mystical life is a higher life elevated above earthly existence and Buber espoused such a "higher life" until a decisive experience changed him. A young man came to seek him one afternoon, after a morning which Buber had devoted to his own personal search for religious enthusiasm and ecstasy. Shortly after this visit he learned that the young man died, apparently a suicide. Shaken by this news, Buber realized that he had not been there "in spirit" with the young man. This led to his "conversion," which he described in these words:

Since then I have given up the religious which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken.<sup>7</sup>

Glatzer interprets this shift toward commitment to everyday earthly existence as Buber's radical break with mysticism.

To Friedman, the aim of the mystic is "to bring the timeless into time—he desires to make the unity without multiplicity into the unity of all multiplicity."<sup>8</sup> He thus sees the mystical experience as one of unity. Friedman claims that Buber maintained, but re-interpreted, mystical experience in his mature philosophy.

In his early work, *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (1909), Buber described the mystical experience as one of unity of the "I" with the world.<sup>9</sup> In *I and Thou*, he still seeks the mystical experience of unity, but he re-interprets it as "the becoming one of the soul."<sup>10</sup> Thus, Friedman claims that Buber, in *I and Thou*, no longer interprets mystical experience as a union with the world or Being but as the undifferentiated unity of the soul itself. To summarize: Friedman contends that Buber did not reject mysticism in his mature philosophy; rather, he re-interpreted its meaning.

Scholem's definition of a "mystic" has a different emphasis: "A man who has been favored with an immediate, and to him real, experience of the divine, of ultimate reality, or who at least strives to attain such experience."<sup>11</sup> There is an immediate or direct experience of God. Although it is true that much of Buber's focus in *I and Thou* is on the I-Thou relation between man and man, the consummation of this relation can occur only

7. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, tr. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 14.

8. Friedman, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

9. See Martin Buber, *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1909), p. xii, where he wrote of the unity of the "I" and the "world" ("... sie erlebt die Einheit des Ich, und in ihr die Einheit von Ich und Welt...")

10. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 89. See also Friedman's introductory essay to Martin Buber, *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization*, tr. with an introductory essay by Maurice Friedman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 39.

11. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, tr. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 5.

in the direct relation with God—the Eternal Thou. As Buber writes: “. . . the inborn Thou is realized in each relation and consummated in none. It is consummated only in the direct relation with the Thou that by its nature cannot become It.”<sup>12</sup> And this quest for a direct, immediate relation to God is, according to Scholem, the essence of mystical striving.

These different conceptions of mysticism focus the problem. How, then, can we determine the role of mysticism in the development of Buber’s religious thought? To answer this question, let us examine how Buber himself uses the term.

### III

In the essay, “God and the Soul” (1943), Buber defines his conception of mysticism in a way that is characteristic of his approach to the religious life: the emphasis is on the individual rather than on an abstract defining principle. His concern is to grasp “just what makes mysticism a singular and remarkable special type of religious life.”<sup>13</sup> He seeks, therefore, the experience of soul that is common to all mystics.

He begins by identifying the core mystical experience of the soul as “an experience of unity.”<sup>14</sup> The common theme that runs throughout Buber’s thought is this quest for unity: unity of Being, unity within man or the soul, and unity between men. Moreover, he considers the striving for unity as the chief inner force making for Jewish creativity through the ages.<sup>15</sup> This emphasis on unity is an indication of why his understanding of the mystical experience of unity is so critical in Buber’s philosophical development.

How does he conceive of this mystical experience of unity? He invites us to consider a mystical act of contemplation. Imagine a mystic looking at a colored surface. One might think that the decisive mystical experience occurs when the multiplicity of colors collapses into one, when the play of colors gives place to the unconditionality of white light. According to Buber, this is not yet the decisive mystical experience. That occurs, he says, when

the act of contemplating is obliterated in the contemplator: not the dissolution of the phenomenal multiplicity, but that of the constructive duality, the duality of experiencing I and experienced object is the decisive factor, that which is peculiar to mysticism in the exact sense.<sup>16</sup>

Mysticism signifies an obliteration of the distinction between experiencing subject and experienced object, it involves the overcoming of the

12. Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 75.

13. Martin Buber, “God and the Soul,” (1943) in *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, ed. and tr. by Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 184.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Martin Buber, “Judaism and Mankind,” in Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, ed. by Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 28.

16. Buber, “God and the Soul,” p. 185.

subject-object dichotomy in an experience of unity or union. And, on its highest level, mysticism is such a union with the Absolute, referred to in mystical literature as *unio mystica*.

Buber's definition of mysticism in its exact sense echoes that of Evelyn Underhill, the outstanding English writer who defined it, in its pure form, as "union with the Absolute," a state in which "Subject and Object, desirous and desired, are one."<sup>17</sup>

Having defined mysticism in its exact sense, Buber then proceeds to qualify his definition, since he rejects a pure monism in which the distinction between man and God is obliterated. Buber prefers a dualistic, theistic mysticism in which man directly encounters the unique personhood of God:

In all mysticism . . . that springs from the soil of the so called "theistic religions," there is an additional factor to which a special, specifically religious significance is to be accorded. Here the mystic knows of a close personal intercourse with God.<sup>18</sup>

Buber characterizes dualistic, theistic mysticism in this manner: "No matter how absolute God is comprehended as being, He is here, nonetheless, not the whole but the Facing One. He is the One standing over and against this man; He is what this man is not and is not what this man is."<sup>19</sup> It is only on the basis of this duality—this distinction between man and God—Buber contends, that true mystical longing can be based:

[I]n this close intercourse that the mystic experiences, God, no matter how infinite he is comprehended as being, is still Person and remains Person. And even if the mystic wants to be merged in Him, he means none other than Him whom he knows in this intercourse, just this Person. The I of the mystic seeks to lose itself in the Thou of God, but this thou of God, or, after the I of the mystic has been merged in Him, this absolute I of God, cannot pass away.<sup>20</sup>

Buber not only rejected the monistic mystic's negation of the distinction between man and God; he also repudiated his negation of the world. In an essay entitled "With a Monist" (1913), he says:

I lack the mystic's negation. I can negate convictions but never the slightest actual thing. The mystic manages, truly or apparently, to annihilate the entire world, or what he so names—all that his senses present to him in perception and in memory—in order, with new disembodied senses or a wholly supersensory power, to press forward to his God. But I am enormously concerned with just this world, this painful and precious fullness of all that I can see, hear, taste. I cannot wash away any part of its reality. I can only wish that I might heighten this reality.<sup>21</sup>

17. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961), p. 72.

18. Buber, "God and the Soul," p. 186.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 186, 187.

21. Martin Buber, "With A Monist," in *Pointing the Way*, ed., and tr. by Maurice Friedman (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 28.

Here is the key to Buber's mature approach to mysticism. If it is defined as a union with, or a total absorption of, the self in the Absolute, in which the world and the Personhood of God are negated, Buber did reject such a monistic view. But if mysticism is defined theistically as an immediate direct encounter with God, in which reality is heightened and not negated, Buber's mature position is still mysticism.

This mysticism, in which reality is affirmed, intensified, and heightened rather than negated, Buber saw in Hasidism, which he believes to be characterized by love of the world in God. He described this kind of mysticism as "realistic and active," and defined it five years after the first publication, in 1923, of *I and Thou*, in this concise formulation as

... a mysticism for which the world is not an illusion, from which man must turn away in order to reach true being, but the reality between God and him in which reciprocity manifests itself . . . A mysticism that may be called such because it preserves the immediacy of the relation, guards the concreteness of the absolute and demands the involvement of the whole being . . .<sup>22</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that Buber did not reject mysticism in his mature philosophy. What were the steps that led to its evolution?

#### IV

In his early thought, under the influence of German mysticism and later Kabbalah, Buber maintained the doctrine of the realization of God through man. Describing this early phase of his development, he explained:

Since 1900 I had first been under the influence of German mysticism from Meister Eckhart to Angelus Silesius, according to which the primal ground (*Urgrund*) of being, the nameless impersonal godhead, comes to birth in the human soul.<sup>23</sup>

This concept originated in the belief of Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth century German mystic, that "God in things is activity, reality, and power, but in the soul he is procreative."<sup>24</sup> Buber wrote his doctoral dissertation on the relation between God's unity and the multiplicity of his creatures in German mysticism,<sup>25</sup> and in it he accepted the view that God becomes Himself through the development of the soul and the world.<sup>26</sup> This

22. Martin Buber, Introduction to "The Baal Shem Tov's Instruction in Intercourse With God," (1928) in *Hasidism and Modern Man*, ed. and tr. by Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), p. 80.

23. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 184, 185.

24. Meister Eckhart, "The Sermons" in Raymond Bernard Blakney, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), p. 103.

25. The title of Buber's dissertation was *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Individuationsprinzips*, 1900. For further information on it, see Robert E. Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 6, 7.

26. Wood, *op. cit.*

notion, coupled with the Kabbalistic idea according to which man has the power to unite the God who is over the world with His *shekhinah* dwelling in the world, led Buber to the thought of the realization of God through man. God, the Absolute, gains the character of reality through man.<sup>27</sup> The idea of the “becoming” or “developing” God reached its culmination in Hegel’s dynamic conception of the Absolute Spirit working out its development through human history.

Buber struggled with this concept of the realization of God through man in his book, *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization* (1913), in which he contrasts the orienting man with the realizing man. The orienting man desires security once and for all; he seeks an absolute general truth that will guide him through life. The realizing man, by contrast, perpetually begins anew and risks all; truth, for him, is not a once-and-for-all affair but a becoming, growing phenomenon. To the realizing man, unity is not given but is created. His task, wrote Buber, is

to establish unity in the world; not unity of the mixture, such as the secure ones invent, but fulfilled unity out of tension and stream, such as will serve the polar earth—the realized countenance of God illuminated out of tension and stream.<sup>28</sup>

In this view, God realizes Himself through man by human experiences of the new and the unprecedented in which man fashions unity out of duality. But this concept of God’s realization through human striving for unity implies that God “becomes” or changes as a result of human action.

During the course of his philosophical development, Buber became aware that this notion of God’s realization through man leads to the concept that God is merely a projection of man. He therefore rejected this notion of God’s realization through man for the concept of the encounter between man and God and enunciated it in his preface to the 1923 edition of his *Reden über das Judentum*:

By the term God, I mean not a metaphysical idea, nor a moral idea, nor a projection of a psychic or social image, nor anything at all created by, or developed within man. I do mean God, whom man, however, possesses only in ideas and images; but these ideas and images are not the work of free creation; they are products of divine-human encounters . . . Man does not possess God Himself, but he encounters God Himself.<sup>29</sup>

This shift in emphasis from God’s realization through man to man’s direct encounter with God, as a real Being over against him, marks

27. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 185.

28. Buber, *Daniel*, pp. 98, 99.

29. Buber, *On Judaism*, his preface to the 1923 edition, pp. 4, 5. For the decisive importance of this preface see Hugo Bergman, “Martin Buber and Mysticism,” in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, ed. by Paul Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), p. 303.

Buber's transition to the mysticism of immediate relation between man and God, which is crystallized in *I and Thou* (1923), defined as an "active and realistic mysticism" in 1928, and further developed in the essay, "God and the Soul" (1943).

## V

We are now in a position to address ourselves to the problem of methodology in the study of mysticism as it relates to Buber's mystical philosophy.

Clearly, there are varieties of mystical experience which call for a typology of mysticism: the pure monistic mysticism of union with the Absolute, the German mystical notion of the realization of God in the human soul and the mystical experience of direct encounter with God.

Given the varieties of mystical experience and the resultant ambiguity of the term "mysticism," can we formulate a definition which clarifies its meaning and suggests a line of demarcation between experiences which can justifiably be regarded as mystical and those which do not fit into this category? This problem, raised by our examination of Buber's mysticism, is important. Unless it is resolved, "mysticism" becomes a "wastebasket" term to label virtually any kind of alleged religious experience which cannot otherwise be classified.

A direction toward a solution to this problem is provided by an illuminating distinction drawn by John E. Smith, professor of philosophy at Yale University, who, in his discussion of the problem of the knowledge of God, distinguishes between the rationalistic and the mystical views. According to the rationalistic view, knowledge of God is a matter of inference and never of immediate insight. God may be inferred, say, on the basis of the order of nature or to satisfy the need for a causal explanation of the world. One does not experience God directly; rather, from the fact of the existence of the world, or the order of nature, God is inferred to exist as a first cause.

By contrast, according to the mystical view, God is known immediately through an insight that can be attained by sudden illumination or through the spiritual preparation of the mind. Smith explains:

The ultimate goal of mystical preparation is to transcend all media of disclosure; media may play a role in preparing the self to receive the insight, but the aim of the mystical tradition in all religions is the final overcoming of all media, representations and intermediaries by an immediate insight into God.<sup>30</sup>

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30. John E. Smith, *Experience and God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 81. Smith's criterion applies to the theistic religions and not to Oriental religions, such as Buddhism, which do not maintain belief in a transcendent God. Smith's criterion is superior to William James' four marks of the mystical experience: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity—cited in his chapter on "Mysticism" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. See Walter Kaufmann's criticism of James' four criteria, where he maintains that noetic



It is the emphasis on an ineffable, immediate insight into God beyond all media and representations—in which the person encounters God Himself and does not infer God's existence from His manifestations—that is the common denominator of theistic mystical experiences and is what differentiates them from other types of religious experience.

And there is no clearer illustration of this quest for an immediate or direct encounter with God than Buber's classic formulation in *I and Thou*:

God cannot be inferred in anything—in nature, say, as its author, or in history as its master, or in the subject as the self that is thought in it. Something else is not given and God then elicited from it; but God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed.<sup>31</sup>

Buber here precisely states the directness and the ineffability of the mystical as against the rationalistic view of the knowledge of God in theistic religion. The *sine qua non* of mystical experience is an ineffable, immediate and direct encounter with the Divine.

In a lecture given in 1951, Buber contended that “the great images of God fashioned by mankind are born not of imagination but of real encounters with real divine power and glory.”<sup>32</sup> It is the quest for such direct encounters with God and the clarification of their meaning that constitute a basic motif in marking Buber's philosophical development as a religious thinker.

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quality, transiency and passivity “afford us no grounds whatsoever for distinguishing the mystic experience: sense experiences also yield knowledge, do not last, and find us receptive rather than active. It would seem therefore that it must be ineffability that sets apart mystic experiences” (Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958], p. 225). Smith's point is that ineffability alone is not sufficient as a criterion; it must be coupled with a direct encounter of, or an immediate insight into, God.

31. Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 80, 81.

32. Martin Buber, “Religion and Reality,” in *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), p. 14.

# *Martin Buber as an Interpreter of the Bible*

MICHAEL FISHBANE

IN 1952, THE FOLLOWING POEM, ENTITLED: "*Bekennntnis des Schriftstellers*" ("Confessions of the Author"), appeared in the *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* (n.f. XX. 3, July).<sup>1</sup> The *Schriftsteller* was Martin Buber.

Once with a light keel  
I shipped out to the land of legends  
Through the storm of deeds and play,  
With my gaze fixed on the goal  
And in my blood the beguiling poison—  
Then one descended to me  
Who seized me by the hair  
And spoke: Now render the Scriptures!

From that hour on the galley  
Keeps my brain and hands on course,  
The rudder writes characters,  
My life disdains its honor  
And the soul forgets that it sang.  
All storms must stand and bow  
When cruelly compelling in the silence  
The speech of the spirit resounds.

Hammer your deeds in the rock, world!  
The Word is wrought in the flood.

In these words, Buber confessed the motivations and destiny of his literary work. The early years were, he later said in another connection, a time of "readiness to make . . . testimony to the great reality of faith disclosed . . . through books and men."<sup>2</sup> But then, with the suddenness of a prophetic commission, and in a manner reminiscent of the prophet Ezekiel, Buber was as one seized by the hair and told: "*Nun stelle die Schrift!*" ("Now render the Scriptures!").

From 1925, when, with his friend, Franz Rosenzweig, he began his great task of Bible translation, to 1961, when, alone, he finished the task, Buber remained a faithful servant of the Word of God in the Hebrew

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1. *A Believing Humanism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), pp. 32f.

2. *Hasidism and Modern Man* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 22.

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Bible—in its concrete and living spokenness. For, while Buber had, indeed, grown up in the presence of the Hebrew Bible, early experiences with German translations had closed the book to him. It was not until years later, in a moment of bereavement after Herzl's death that, by chance, he rediscovered the living world of Scripture. His plans in 1913, in the company of an inter-confessional group of theologians, to translate the Bible free of traditional and stylistic encumbrances, were never realized. It was only at the initial overture of the publisher, Lambert Schneider, that Buber turned to this task—now with the assistance of Franz Rosenzweig.<sup>3</sup>

Book followed translated book; and soon, concurrently, essays and volumes appeared on the nature of Biblical speech and style and on the larger questions of the Biblical witness of faith. A project to write a theological commentary, treating Biblical problems of faith in the order of their textual appearance, also begun simultaneously with the translation, was not realized.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Buber decided to focus on “those subjects which seemed of special consequence” to him. The most important of these was, by his own testimony,<sup>5</sup> the subject of Israelite messianism. His book, *Kingship of God*, inaugurated this planned study of messianism in 1932—an interest, even then, of twenty years' duration. *The Prophetic Faith*, published in 1942, was the only successor to this work, and was to have constituted the planned third part; the second part is known only in fragments (he published articles on Samuel and Saul). In addition to collections of essays, published together with Rosenzweig, and alone, Buber also wrote *Moses*, which first appeared in 1945, and *Good and Evil*, published in 1952.

All the foregoing works address the reader with the living power of the Bible, with its humanized Word of God present in direct concreteness. The Bible never loses this quality of spokenness, Buber affirms; it is never a text but always, and yet again, a Voice: the addressing, present Voice of God and the reacting, responding voice of man.

Once again the Bible could be heard directly. Despite a false start at trying to revamp the Luther version, Buber, together with Rosenzweig, tried to break the crust of the traditional and cultural features which clung to the older translations. He tried to scrape away the “leprosy of fluency” which made the text seem familiar and not spiritually demanding. The goal was not to re-encounter the Bible as read in ancient, medieval, or modern synagogues or churches; the goal was, by contrast, to return to the first of the four layers of Scripture, to its unencrusted plain-sense. The task was to hear, in all presentness, the Voice of God in Scripture, and not the Voice of God in Tradition. The ancient crown of Torah was restored to its first glory. Through Buber's manifold efforts, in essay, monograph,

3. For these reflections, see *Darkho Shel Miqra* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1964), pp. 344—49.

4. *Kingship of God*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 1.

5. *Ibid.*

and translation, the mighty fire of the *peshat*, the living word, split the rock of illusion, expectation and habit.<sup>6</sup>

But it was especially through his work of translation that the life-blood of Scripture—its spoken directness, and its use of word-repetitions, assonance, alliteration, and word-correspondences intended by the text—was first apprehended. The principles involved were only later articulated in essay form. The translation proceeded from Buber's conviction that the Bible was, first and foremost, an oral document and, thus, a project of speech. The fossilized text could be heard only when spoken. *Miqra'*, Scripture, is a "calling out." Accordingly, deep attentiveness was given to its accoustical reality, as expressed through the aforementioned puns, repetitions, and the like. And to insure further that the "calling out" of Scripture would correspond to its primary spokenness, the lines of the translation were arranged in cola . . . also called breath-units.<sup>7</sup> In a striking manner, the breath-units of the translation are remarkably close to the accentual system of the ancient Massoretes.

The reclamation of the primal power of the words of Scripture was further enhanced by another acoustical reality. The principle that every Hebrew verbal-stem be rendered consistently by one German root is maintained throughout. With full allowance for changed meanings over time, there is, nevertheless, an emphasis on the root sense of words. Thus, the translation is never abstract, but always attunes us to the primal meanings of the roots. When *Torah* is rendered "Instruction" (*Weisung*) and not "law;" when *nabi* is "proclaimer" (*Künder*) and not "Prophet;" when *mizbe'ah* is "slaughtersite" (*Schlachtstatt*) and not "altar;" and when *ariri* is "naked of children" (*kinderblos*) and not simply "childless," then old cultural associations are shattered—and the root concreteness of the Hebrew strains to be heard, even against the grain of Western consciousness. Thus, by the fact that the one Hebrew word, *ru'ah*, is used in Num. 11 to characterize both the "spirit" of God's grace and the natural "wind" brought by God, Buber hoped that the attentive reader would hear beyond the Greek dualities of spirit and nature, to the deep unity of the created world as inscribed in the Hebrew language. *Braus* and *Geistbraus* in the Book of Numbers are two pinions of the one wind-spirit that both soars over the waters and gives man the breath of his deepest being.<sup>8</sup>

But the task of healing the "leprosy of fluency" does not minister solely to those who have heard the Scripture only in a translation prepared for a specific faith-communion, or in the still-born piety of falsely elevated or colloquial translations intended for congregational worship. The translation also addresses those for whom Hebrew has attained either

6. cf. *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung* (Berlin; Schocken, 1936), pp. 29, 45, 86, 307, 322f.

7. For discussion, see *Ibid.*, pp. 80–85, 122, 332f, 367f.

8. "Der Mensch von heute und die jüdische Bibel," *Die Schrift* . . . , pp. 33–38. This section does not appear in the translation in *On the Bible* (New York: Schocken, 1968). Cf. his remarks on nature and Spirit in *Israel and the World* (New York: Schocken, 1963), p. 34.

the fluency of conventional, traditional interpretations, or the all-too-human fluency of common speech. Here, too, Buber's translation is new speech and new understanding. Rhythms are recaptured; puns are drawn into associative tensions. Key words and associations—the inner-exegesis of Scripture—are reheard. The Voice is the voice of God's dominion; the hands of denominational translation committees are not felt.

In many writings over the years, Buber, directly and indirectly, utilizes the principle of the theme word which guided his translation. Thus, the express emphasis of a verbal stem in a given text gives "hearing" witness to its intention. The repetition, by Laban, of the varying senses of the stem *ganav*, in Genesis 31, underscores the stealing and stealth of the action; just as the recurrence of the word *panim*, "face," "face," in Genesis 32, picks up different dimensions of Jacob's night strife at the Jabbok ford.

But the repetition of key verbal-stems illumines, equally, the unity of a text or sequence of texts. Buber frequently cuts across the boundaries and strata of documentary theory and discloses what he intuitively as its deeper literary-religious totality. His analyses of Genesis 15 and the Korah narratives in the Book of Numbers disclose an unsuspected unitary coherence for shorter texts; while his arresting analysis of "Abraham the Seer" discloses a tectonic unity of seven stages on Abraham's way of faith—each marked by the stem *ra'ah*, "to see." Buber has here at once intensified and verbally focused the considerations also felt by ancient Rabbinic midrash, which located ten trials in Abraham's life, and has pressed beyond the superficial distinctions of the documentary theory. What faithful tradition did with the received materials—as a shaping, organic imagination—can never be adequately explained, says Buber, by piecemeal analysis.<sup>9</sup>

In all of this Buber followed his own advice, already formulated in an early talk, given to Jewish students in Prague. He counseled each of them:

The reader of the Bible must attempt to understand the spirit of its original language, the Hebrew—an understanding that is service (*dienendes Wissen*); he will approach it not as a work of literature but as the basic documentation of the unconditional's effect on the spirit of the Jewish people; whatever his knowledge of old as well as new exegesis, he will search beyond it for the original meaning of each passage. No matter how familiar he is with modern Biblical criticism's distinction between sources, he will penetrate beyond this criticism to more profound distinctions and connections . . . He will read the Bible with an appreciation of its poetic form, but also with an intuitive grasp of the suprapoetic element which transcends all form.<sup>10</sup>

And all of this was said in 1918, against the background of the then regnant orthodoxy of German Biblical criticism! Surely the independence

9. See "Abraham the Seer," *On the Bible*, pp. 22–43, esp. 24f.

10. "Herut: On Youth and Religion," *On Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1967), p. 172.

and vision of Buber's spirit of interpretation has no better witness than this.

As cited, Buber wishes "to penetrate . . . to . . . profound . . . connections;" and, so, beyond the unity of texts and the tectonic unity of cycles, he also points to word connections at a distance. His analysis of phrases used recurrently with Noah and with Abraham helps disclose the spiritual continuity of Biblical leadership in the early Genesis narratives. Two other examples are worth noting, as well. First, we may call attention to the repetition of the verb *ramah*, "to cheat," in the Jacob cycle. It occurs first in the scene of Jacob's original deception, as Isaac's retort to Esau (Gen 27:35). When it recurs, several chapters later, it is used by Jacob, himself, who contemns Laban for cheating on his pledge of Rachel (29:25). Laban retorts: "Such is not our local custom to give the younger daughter (in marriage) prior to the elder (v. 26)." The ironic counterpoint of the twin scenes of two brothers and two sisters, and of the sibling rivalry between them, is held taut in the coil of the verb *ramah*—through which Jacob initiates his own condemnation.<sup>11</sup>

The second example reveals yet deeper Biblical unities and subtler theological nuances: just as God saw and did and completed His work of creation in six days, blessed it, and rested on the seventh (Gen 1:1-2:4a), so, correspondingly, at the building of the Tabernacle, the cloud covered the mountain for six days and God called to Moses on the seventh to see and bless the work upon completion (Exod. 24:16—39:43). To say that both texts are "P" traditions without focusing on this correspondence is to move along a fairly inconsequential literary surface. To be addressed and taught by this correspondence is to attend to a profound theological link between creation and Revelation: the goal of God's creation is Revelation to Man; the task of Man is to share in the completion of creation. Man cosmicizes, sacralizes a dwelling for God on earth. It is true that ancient and medieval Jewish exegesis elaborated midrashically on the theme of the shrine as a cosmos. But Buber has allowed *only* the text to speak, by focusing on the ungilded recurrence of certain words.<sup>12</sup>

By driving so deeply and attentively into the *received* text, beyond initial cuts and historical stratifications, it would be inappropriate simply to dismiss aspects of Buber's text-interpretation as midrashic or harmonistic. His approach is neither the one nor the other. He tries to hear the text beyond the conventions of tradition *and* scholarly orthodoxy. He tries to wrestle with the living religious rhythms and echoes of the received and unified text. He is not satisfied to record parallel language, but pushes the heart to record the connections heard. Study, as we quoted above, must be of service to the spirit of speaking and hearing man.

It may further be remarked, in this connection, that Buber is uncon-

11. "Leitwortstil in der Erzählung des Pentateuchs," *Die Schrift* . . . , pp. 224-225. (*Darkho Shel Miqra*, p. 291).

12. "Ben Dorenu Ve-Hamigra," *Darkho Shel Miqra*, p. 56.

cerned with a dispassionate study or catalogue of rhetorical or literary features. He repeatedly emphasizes that there can be no separation between form and content. A text exists in, and must be heard through, the concrete actuality of its words, images, and rhetoric. The same principle applies to larger narrative totalities. Buber insisted, for example, that one cannot separate the historical from the Biblical; they conjoin in and through each other—in so far as concrete events take shape through “spontaneously forming memory.” Only in this wedlock of form and content can the Biblical response to events be heard.

In his aforementioned 1918 address “On Youth and Religion,” Buber stresses the importance of the Hebrew language for the deepest understanding of the Hebrew Bible. This emphasis was first sounded in 1913, in plans for an institution to be guided by the concept of Hebrew Humanism, and was repeated sixteen years later at the 16th Zionist Congress. In 1933, many of his thoughts received renewed formulation in an essay entitled “Biblical Humanism.” Much as “humanism moves from the mystery of language to the mystery of the human person,” so that “the reality of language . . . [will] become operative in man’s spirit” and its “truth . . . itself prove in the persons existence,” “Biblical humanism moves from the mystery of the Hebrew language to the mystery of the Hebrew being.” Through attentiveness to the Biblical word, an “ordering and directing word,” the primal forces of the Jewish people would be reborn. The response to this word would be the “ordering of the directing deed” from which “the archetype of this people [first] sprung.”<sup>13</sup>

Everything in the Bible is genuine spokenness” (*Gesprochenheit*), says Buber, and so it is the Bible which, quintessentially, discloses the mystery and power of the Hebrew language. Indeed, he stresses, even the legal and priestly materials retain the tremulous quality of speech and address. They, too, demand response; they, too, can lead the individual, if he will but open himself totally to its authoritative address, to respond in the sphere of his own life. Thus, for all the specific content of the Bible, which Buber never gainsaid, attentiveness to the Bible leads beyond content to a structural assessment of the word itself. The peculiar primal quality of Biblical speech, he says, is “the mystery of its spokenness (*Gesprochenheit*) here and now; it is an ‘event’ (*Geschehen*) in mutuality between listener and executor.”<sup>14</sup>

The Biblical word, then, when truly heard, communicates its facticity and its demand for response. The way of the Word leads to the way of the deed—for Biblical man, and for the modern man of the Bible. This word is neither logos nor form; it is the terrifying, claiming and demanding word of God. Man must stand firm, he must respond with his whole being to that which calls him “Thou.” The deep structure of the Biblical word and address is correlated to the deep structure of response and deed: the

13. *On Judaism* pp. 212-13.

14. *On the Bible* pp. 214, 216.



concreteness of the spoken word leads to the concreteness of reality and its events. The creation is renewed in each new human who turns to God in the concrete moments of His revelatory presentness. As this turning becomes unifying action, a glimpse of the final unity of all creation, in Redemption, is granted. The significant inter-connection between response and deed is Israel's archetypal truth. The Bible is its documentary witness, so that, in listening, we are led to reality.<sup>15</sup>

As the great witness to the dialogue between heaven and earth, says Buber, the Bible records both the impact of the Unconditional on the life of Israel and Israel's response. God demands the *whole* of life, and He wants man's unconditional submission and response to Him in the totality of his life. "Thou shalt be *whole*-(*tamim*) with the Lord your God." This verse from Deuteronomy was heard by Buber as if to say: You, you who are addressed and singled out as "Thou," be whole, be pure with your God; give Him the totality of your life; live it in reciprocal response to His address; make no false separations, set up no separate kingdoms, and let no other god dwell in your midst. Hear, Israel! Our God is One Lord.<sup>16</sup>

The great and primal expression of ancient Israel's drive towards unity under God is, for Buber, the Kingship of God. Israel first experienced God's leading presence at the time of the Exodus and, in covenantal joy, proclaimed Him as King in Jeshurun at Sinai. The covenant—*berit*—is the reality of God's sovereignty over the life of all Israel. This covenant is no contract, no objective form, but, rather, "an assumption into a life-relationship . . . comprehending the entire life of the men involved."<sup>17</sup> What God requires of Israel in the "Eagle Speech" of Exodus 19 is "unlimited recognition of the factual and contemporary kingship of God over the whole of national existence."<sup>18</sup>

According to Buber's understanding, the theocracy of the covenant, the primal expression of Israel's life of faith, degenerated with the death of Joshua, and was finally replaced by David—a king of flesh and blood. The dialogue with an all-ruling God, which claimed such leaders as Abraham and Moses, was now fractured. Only the hope remained, the messianic hope, of a true turning in unconditional response to God alone. Now the deep dialectic of history set in. The long course of external history is the history of failed, compromised, and imperfect responses to God. The true center of the religion of Israel, however, is the recurrent struggle, in the midst of historical reality, to preserve the mystery and dominion of God beyond all "dogmatic encystments." Moses begins this struggle against all attempts to "have" or "utilize" God; his burden is shouldered by the prophets. They repeatedly bear witness to the ideal.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

16. See *Ha-Ruah Ve-Hamizut*, "Darkhei Ha-Dat Be-Arzenu," (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot Lesifrut, 1942), pp. 118—26.

17. *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 103.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 128f.

But their way was a way of resistance and failure, along the inner-face of history.

The prophets, those true servants, those sufferers for God's true Kingdom, continued the work of Moses—albeit in apparent public failure. It is the prophets who insistently turn to man with God's ever-renewed address. Man is told “turn,” “return” and face God alone; he is called to decide wholeheartedly for God's Kingdom. In the living and concrete moment, the voice of the prophet, God's word, addresses the man who truly listens; it addresses him to live in reciprocal freedom with God. For the true prophet is neither world-weary nor apocalyptic, he is neither “worldly-wise” nor fatalistic. This gnosis, also in its modern forms and guises, is, for Buber, the great enemy of the spirit of man. As against the counsels of despair, of fore-knowledge and of rote cant, the prophetic word—God's word—gives new direction, new hope, new freedom. The prophet, says Buber, is the prototype of the man who suffers and struggles, yet stands firm in the abyss of history; he is the prototype of the dialogical man who turns his whole being to God in freedom and responsibility.<sup>20</sup>

Buber came to teach us the teaching of God the Creator, who renews His world each day for the person who opens himself truly to Him. Man must remain steadfast in this creation, he must hold his ground in concrete life. If he does so he lives faith-full, in faith, in *emunah*. Indeed, the core of Biblical faith is, for Buber, this trusting reliance upon God who has been, and promised to be, a Present One. His presentness is, in World-time, His direct address to man. God, who is the Creator, addresses man through His creation just here in lived concreteness, just when man knows himself to be addressed as “Thou”—and this is Revelation.

But, for Buber, this notion of Revelation as address and response, in the immediacy of life, is not a revelation of law. God becomes present as an addressing One, as a Presence that is neither general nor abstract. For this reason, and because God reveals His Presence anew every moment, there can be no once-for-all Revelation. Even at Sinai, when God was proclaimed King in covenantal joy, there was no *general* Revelation: the One Presence was felt by all, individually.

But there is more: the response to God in faithfulness at Sinai was one with the pre-Sinaitic responses of the Patriarchs and Moses. Here Buber makes a crucial assumption: for him, though the law is from Moses at Sinai, yet the Revelation at Sinai is not Law, but, rather, the living Presence of the One who pledged himself to Moses, and to the patriarchs before him, to be present. When challenged that the law is, in fact, an *absolutum* within Scripture, Buber responds that for him, as “a believing thinker, as a believing servant of the Truth,” who hears the text in direct encounter and not as an “object of research,” the law is an accretion within Torah.<sup>21</sup>

20. cf. “Biblical Leadership,” *On the Bible*, p. 148.

21. See P. A. Schilpp, and M. Friedman, eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, The Library of

He acknowledges that many Biblical laws do witness to the Kingship of God; but he maintains, nevertheless, that Torah is fundamentally instruction along the way of life, and *not* a law above it.

However, if Torah is instruction along the way, if it is new and renewed each moment so that the true response must be correspondingly new and renewed, the following questions arise: Is God only "the God of a moment, a moment God?" Is continuity or Tradition possible here? To these questions an answer does emerge from Buber's Bible interpretation, quite related to his teachings in non-Biblical writings. The pre-Sinaitic God who "was there" for the patriarchs and led them forth, to whose promise Abraham responded in trustful faithfulness (Gen. 15), was, to Moses, the very God of the fathers. Thus, Moses understood the revelation to him as a remanifestation, albeit in new form, of the ancient god of the fathers. In this way, his immediate, momentary experience of God's presence was deepened precisely as he recognized in it a deeper historical continuity. The chain of Biblical leaders and stewards, moreover, further discloses the abiding presentness of this God in the flesh of each historical moment; for they, too, recognize in God's revelatory presence to them the remanifestation of the god of the covenant.

But what was a true conviction for Moses and the prophets was not equally true for their contemporaries; these latter did not so easily recognize in the promises and demands addressed to them the Voice of the ancient god of the fathers and the covenant. The turmoil of their historical lives, the routinization of servitudes, and the immediate gratifications—albeit fragmentary—of pagan options, hardened their hearts to any response.

And, in truth, as Buber very well knew, the servitudes of life and the fragmentariness-at best-of encounters with God cut deeply into the heart of modern man, as well. In many writings he addresses himself to the "eclipse" of God. One series of responses, pertinent here for their place in his Bible teachings, builds on the conviction that the *total* Biblical corpus may serve as a paradoxical witness of God for mankind during the times of apparent divine absence.

Speaking to Jews in 1952, after the searing events of the Holocaust, and addressing himself to their sensed rupture with the historic God of Israel, Buber stressed that if they be but steadfast and persist in their memory of God's presence to his creatures, as preserved in the Hebrew Bible, they could yet hope that, even after such deep darkness, they would again recognize their wrathful, loving God. The witness of the entire Bible would then, by its testimony to the past reality of dialogue between God and Israel, keep open the painful hope of renewed contact with Him.<sup>22</sup> In fact, already in the dark hour of 1941, Buber had spoken of the need to bear a patient and attentive suffering. Even in despair, dialogical man

Living Philosophers, (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), pp. 728f.

22. "The Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth," *On Judaism*, pp. 215-16.

must say—for the sake of being whole with the God of all existence, for the sake of keeping dialogical openness with God in all His manifestations: “This [too!] is my God and I will glorify Him.”<sup>23</sup>

Buber struggles with the encounter with evil in many other texts, also. The Bible not only taught him, as a contemporary man, by the totality of its witness, but by specific examples of human faithfulness which it has preserved. Almost as a textual gloss on the preceding life experiences, but stated as an interpretation of the difficult passage in the Book of Exodus, where Moses is attacked by the Lord during his return to Egypt (Exod. 4:24–26), Buber explains the event as part of the inner-spiritual biography of Moses. After his commission, Moses had yet to be tested before the One who could be there as He would be there. Buber stated that the man of God has to live through, faithfully, the reality that the Unconditional is the source of All; only then can he be a true “sent one” into history. One cannot know such a God cognitively, but one *can* be faithful to Him and His Sovereign Unity by living steadfastly *through* the experience. This teaching appears in *Moses*, published in 1945.

For Buber, the Book of Job is also a clear witness to the reality of Biblical *emunah*; of a resolute steadfastness and openness before the shattering contradictions of historical existence. His thoughts on Job appear in *The Prophetic Faith*, published in 1942, in which a dominant portion is given over to the faith of prophetic sufferers—men who work secretly, yet steadfastly, for God’s true kingdom in the context of history and its evils. Job, says Buber, is faithful to the God of his past experience despite his present suffering and the cant of his friends; indeed, he trusts in God’s renewed and justifying presence to him. For Buber, Job is a prophetic type, and the book is written in the prophetic spirit. Job, he says, turns from the “reasonable and rational God” which the friends’ religion offers, “a deity whom he, Job, does not perceive either in his own experience or in the world.”<sup>24</sup> He waits and hopes in this “cruel” (30.21) and living God—now withdrawn.

The revelation to Job, the answer, is manifestly no response of content. It is, rather, a revelation through creation itself. The silence and vacuum are broken. “The creation itself, already means communication between Creation and creature.”<sup>25</sup> The answer of justice is given, not generally, but specifically, to Job through creation, which now manifests God’s faithful and distributing justice to each created entity which “He allows to become entirely itself.” Theories of compensatory justice evaporate. The sufferer is healed. Job “sees” God as He, God, draws near to him through creation, as “He offers Himself to him as an answer.”<sup>26</sup> God’s revelation is his Presence, His “being there” with his creature. Indeed, just

23. *Ha-Ruah Ve-Hamizut*, p. 126.

24. *The Prophetic Faith* (New York: Harper, 1949), p. 191.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

26. *Ibid.*

this constituted the new understanding of the sufferer of Ps. 73, about which Buber taught in *The Prophetic Faith*, and to which he returned later, in *Good and Evil* (1952)—after an experience of suffering (the war of Arab against Jew in 1948) which he owned to be even more painful than the Second World War which had just ended.<sup>27</sup>

It must be admitted that these remarks on faith and revelation, particularly as they bear on the historical sufferer, are found in other writings of Buber, especially in the closing pages of *I and Thou*. Yet, just because there is often such an independent cogency to Buber's interpretations of difficult Biblical passages, even where they may correlate with his non-Biblical interpretations, I am reluctant to dismiss his Biblical work as a gloss on his life-thought. One must judge each case independently, but, *also* appreciate the deep relationship between Buber's "I-Thou" thought and his Bible studies; the one confirmed the other; and each acted on the other, reciprocally. Buber intuited the Biblical soul of Judaism long before *I and Thou* was a literary germ-cell; and we should note what has not been fully appreciated: *I and Thou* is, itself, a deeply Biblical work. This fact is evident, not only in the subtle uses of Biblical passages or phrases which Buber adopts favorably in his dialectical polemic, but, also, in his use of explicit Biblical conceptions. We might note that his interpretation of the tetragrammaton as the Present One who "is there," appears in *I and Thou* years before his work with Rosenzweig; and we should also note the prominent and ubiquitous use of the term, *Umkehr*, in that work, a term which reflects none other than Biblical *teshuvah*, or turning.

Again and again Buber teaches deeply; again and again he has guided our hearing to the spoken word of Scripture. Many specific details of his interpretations may not now, or ever, be accepted. But his deep hearing into the living dynamics of the Biblical word, his attentiveness to the concreteness of speech as an event being formed and demanding renewed response, and his vision into the unity of Scripture as a theology narrated through the concreteness of life, all reclaim the birth-right of the Hebrew Bible as a witness to God's dialogue with His creation. This dialogue must be heard in its own voice—independently of successive interpretations and traditions. Buber makes us hear the Bible as the verbal traces of religious reality itself.

Buber's hearing and vision are united: his scholar's task is his human task. Such separate domains as literature, history, or testimony of faith, which the modern spirit has carved apart, are joined by him into one whole. Against the scholarly idols of literary criticism and historical realism Buber has set the possibility of a believing scholarship. Such a scholarship, in its openness to the text, penetrates beyond temporary or false distinctions and does not deify putative textual strata; such a schol-

27. See his introductory remark in *Two Types of Faith* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 15. Writing this book in particular, he says, helped him endure the war in faith. The theme of suffering and faith recurs therein.

arship does not use the keys of philology for their own sake, but, rather, to open the lexical doors of the text and allow the attentive reader to be addressed by God in words formed neither by his cultural illusions nor by his personal dispositions. An approach such as Buber's does not read the Biblical text as a prescribed object, but hears it as an inscribed Voice; it is not as concerned with the authenticity of the historical record as with the authenticity of faith expressed in, and through, its verbal traces.

And, finally, Buber's Biblical work seeks to give one the ears to hear the chords of religious reality in the Biblical text—so that, in hearing, he can strive to make this reality actual in his own life. Buber hoped that Bible study, and its witness to the addressing Presence of God which demands a response in all of existence, would open modern man to a new and open encounter with the surging stream of life and the Eternal Thou who addresses him in, and through, it. We recall the end of the poem with which we opened: "Hammer your deeds in the rock, world!/The Word is wrought in the flood." Study, as Buber said in his 1918 talk on the Bible, must be in the service of life itself.

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# *Martin Buber and the Drama of Otherness: The Dynamics of Love, Art, and Faith*

EDWARD K. KAPLAN

MARTIN BUBER IS KNOWN AS THE PHILOSOPHER of the inter-human; he stands for dialogue and harmony. He is the hero of idealistic adolescents and of older people who continue to cherish a vision of unity and concord. A vast distortion of Buber's thought underlies this stereotyped image of optimism and freedom from strife, one which denies a frightful reality that is fundamental to Buber and to common experience: the irreducible otherness of what we seek, our distance from the goals and values which define humanity as unique and holy. Buber's understanding is unambiguous; he considers the essence of being human as

the longing for perfected relation or for perfection in the relation. . . . Here is disclosed to us the vestibule out of which open the doors of the four potencies in the inner rooms of knowledge, love, art, and faith. They all stand against the world becoming alien, assist us against its alienation.<sup>1</sup>

He postulates the inescapable reality of alienation. His acceptance of otherness is the most positive and powerful dimension of his message.

Buber's exploration of "the four [human] potencies" of "knowledge, love, art, and faith" responds with remarkable clarity and realism to today's situation. His understanding of the dynamics of love, art, and faith are particularly helpful to those who, in this age of disbelief and bitterness between people, strive to unify sundered humanity. Buber does not deny our pain, nor does he veil our essential aloneness with a heavenly vision. He refuses to wall the human from the divine; rather, he provides clues as to how love and art—two rare but undeniably real human experiences—prefigure and mirror the permanent relationship with the Eternal. As we love, so we pray; as we create, so we live in the world. Buber explains why the greatest barriers to these joys can actualize our fullest capacities. Relation and dialogue participate in a drama of otherness in which our finest humanity, realistically, emerges.

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1. Martin Buber, "Man and His Image-work," *The Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 163.

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*Dimensions of Human Intimacy*

Buber's philosophy of the I-Thou dialogue represents a permanent protest against alienation: against the absorption of individuals by social or political collectivism, against exploitive I-It relationships between people, or between a person and the natural world. Many of his writings—including the seminal *I and Thou* (1923)—respond explicitly to crises in European culture and in the Middle East. It is foolish to accuse him of "romanticism" or "mysticism" (if we understand these terms to imply evasion of reality); Buber's realism is as relentless as it is compassionate. The *sine qua non* of his celebration of human mutuality and cooperation, and even of union between lovers in the most intimate of bonds, is a terrifying distance. Buber describes human fulfillment as two-fold: I faces Thou, mutuality and reciprocity require difference. He defines this polarity in a 1951 essay in philosophical anthropology as one of "Distance and Relation."

The I-Thou "meeting" between people, or between a person and anything else, demands acknowledgment of their essential separateness. The very dynamics of relation, of the authentic and concrete encounter, presupposes a fundamental *otherness*. That otherness, or alienation, is the given without which relation does not exist. Buber distinguishes two movements in completed relation: the first he calls "the primal setting at a distance," the second, "entering into relation." This polarity is simultaneous and embraces our possibilities:

[The person] can fill the act of setting at a distance with the will to relation, relation having been made possible only by that act; he can accomplish the act of relation in the acknowledgment of the fundamental actuality of the distance. But the two movements can also contend with one another, each seeing in the other the obstacle to its own realization. And finally, in moments and forms of grace, unity can arise from the extreme tension of the contradiction as the overcoming of it, which is granted only now and in this way.<sup>2</sup>

The unity of dialogue emerges from an experienced "tension of the contradiction," not as a denial of it; the tension of essential otherness, as it is confronted radically, is overcome, if only for a moment. Briefly put, people can relate authentically only as individuals, in the shared distance between self and other. Buber usually characterizes "unity" as "betweenness" which both transcends and affirms distance.

Teachers and parents understand that it is essential to foster independence in those for whom they are responsible. The strong sense of autonomy that we must nurture in students and children requires the

2. *Knowledge of Man*, p. 64; cf. Paul Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), pp. 694–695, for Buber's clarification. This volume, and Maurice Friedman's critical summary, *Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955), remain the most useful introductions.

young to separate themselves, sometimes violently, from their older models. Buber understands that "in education . . . there is a lofty asceticism," a necessary mortification of personal needs. A new parent begins this task as he or she is awakened in the dark silent morning, wrenched from the deepest folds of withdrawal from responsibility, to answer lovingly a crying infant. This asceticism is essentially positive:

[Education is] an asceticism which rejoices in the world, for the sake of the responsibility for a realm of life which is entrusted to us for our influence but not our interference—either by the will to power or by Eros. The spirit's service of life can be truly carried out only in the system of reliable counterpoint—of giving and withholding oneself, intimacy and distance, which of course must not be controlled by reflection but must arise from the living tact of the natural and spiritual man.<sup>3</sup>

Buber insists upon the necessity of withdrawing oneself, of maintaining a distance between educator and student (or parent and child). This dialogue should remain one-sided:

No other relation draws its inner life like this one from the element of inclusion, but no other is in that regard like this, completely directed to one-sidedness, so that if it loses one-sidedness it loses essence.<sup>4</sup>

Why this apparent subversion of mutuality? The reciprocity of dialogue need not require equality; parents and children, teachers and students, are not equal. A little person cannot be as responsible for the elder as the elder must be for his or her charge. The asceticism of adulthood involves locating the responsibility for one's decisions and actions, and helping the young distinguish theirs.

The educator stands at both ends of the common situation, the pupil only at one end. In the moment when the pupil is able to throw himself across and experience from over there, the educative relationship would be burst asunder, or change into friendship.<sup>5</sup>

Distance must be accepted because education requires trust, and distance is the prerequisite of trust:

Trust, trust in the world, because this human being exists—that is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. Because this human being exists, meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth.<sup>6</sup>

The trust that we learned, or did not learn, when young, our confi-

3. Martin Buber, "Education," in *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965), p. 95.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101; see Buber's remarkable dialogue with the psychologist, Carl Rogers, in the appendix to *Knowledge of Man*, pp. 166–184.

6. "Education," p. 98.

dence in what, or whom, we cannot fully know, underlie the mature intimacies of friendship and love. The brutal fact of otherness strives with the persistent desire to spin a web of our desires around our partner. Social realities now make it harder to avoid Buber's demand that marriage (or any form of life-sharing) be dialogical:

This person is other, essentially other than myself, and this otherness of his is what I mean, because I mean him; I confirm it; I wish his otherness to exist, because I wish his particular being to exist. That is the basic principle of marriage and from this basis, if it is a real marriage, to insight into the right and legitimacy of otherness. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Alienation and pain do not menace this "exemplary bond;" on the contrary, conflict can enhance its fullness

by its steady experiencing of the life-substance of the other as other, and still more by its crises and overcoming of them which rises out of the organic depths, whenever the monster of otherness, which but now blew on us with its icy demon's breath and now is redeemed by our risen affirmation of the other, which knows and destroys all negation, is transformed into the mighty angel of union of which we dreamed in our mother's womb.

Conflict weans us from the unrealistic wish of womb-like dependence (or domination). Denial of conflict and separateness lead only to boredom, cold politeness, and its silent partner, displaced anger—or to the exquisite cruelty which bitter and frightened lovers inflict with consummate artistry. Marriage as a confirmation of otherness cannot guarantee us against pain, but it can, and must, nurture faith. Love survives in a mutual trust of the benevolent partners. That miraculous trust is fortified by our limitless yearning for perfect companionship.

Today, failures in intimacy are most conspicuous. Legion are the pained, angry, and lonely individuals scorched by love. Divorced people now comprise a socially-accepted exploding population of anguish and solitude. Increasingly, men and women enter into intimacy with terror, or with an excruciating sense of impermanence and futility. Buber's understanding of marriage as a dialogue of otherness suggests that the current crisis may, in fact, enhance the possibilities of intimacy. Realistic intimacy builds upon "the strictness and depth of human individuation, the elemental otherness of the other."<sup>8</sup> Those who have endured divorce share the grief of those whose loved one has died. Death is universal, while divorce seems to be a byproduct of cultural change. Yet divorce is a little death which confronts—albeit with a perverse legal shallowness—the true frailty of the dream of perfect union. The deepest loves die a multitude of deaths while at the same time weaving a tapestry of their moments of

7. This quotation and the next one are from "The Question to the Single One," *Between Man and Man*, pp. 61 and 62.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

grace. Often only despair can force us to accept the distance between people, the finitude of that which challenges our will to unity. Shared suffering and its child, compassion, can make of agony a communion. Only by trusting our vulnerable separateness, Buber implies, can we achieve authentic intimacy.

Buber applied his theory of individual relationships to politics when he dared to trust that Arabs and Jews could live peacefully, not through stiff tolerance but in willing cooperation, in the land of Palestine. His challenge did not endear him to the majority. Yet, during the elaboration of the present essay, on 20 November 1977, a remarkable and unique confirmation of his faith occurred: Anwar el-Sadat, President of Egypt, was welcomed in Jerusalem and addressed the Knesset, explicitly recognizing the state with which his nation was, technically, still at war. Millions of people watched, on television, the handshakes and embraces, and heard the hopeful words of former enemies now devoted to dialogue toward peace—and most believed them to be sincere. From how far they had come in that moment in which otherness reached toward the partner! Hatred is no longer relevant. Whether or not Begin or Sadat will survive to see the mutual dream realized, or how long it will take, one fact cannot change: the myth of absolute divorce between the Arab and Jewish peoples—wedded so tragically by geography and divine promise—is relinquished. We share Buber's prayer that human wisdom is strong and courageous enough to construct, upon the foundation of precious and fearful otherness, real understanding and cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

### *Art and Poetry*

Buber's understanding of art as dialogue expands an essentially solitary human activity. His essay on "Man and his Image-work" defines artistic creation as a meeting between a person and "nature" (nature being "the world of the senses thought as of existing independently of us").<sup>10</sup> He explicates Albrecht Dürer's dictum that "the artist . . . tears art out of nature, in which it is hidden." The artist does not impose upon the world a form of his or her imagination; rather, the artist, through sense perception and imagination, actualizes a "form" potentially contained within the material with which the artist works. It is another act in the drama of otherness:

[W]e must proceed from this unimageable, unrealizable, uncanny, unhomelike world if we want to find the nature of which we ourselves may say that art is hidden in it and is to be "torn" out of it.

9. See Martin Buber, *Israel and Palestine* (London: East and West Library, 1952), and *Israel in the World* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963). A most useful perspective can be gained from the positions disseminated by Breira, the Jewish alternative group, 200 Park Avenue, Room 1603, New York, N.Y. 10003.

10. *Knowledge of Man*, p. 153; the next two quotations are from pp. 155 and 156 respectively.

Artistic figuration, the creation of forms, realizes the faith which affirms human significance over against an irreducible otherness.

[Artistic] vision is figurating faithfulness to the unknown and does its work in cooperation with it. It is faithfulness not to the appearance, but to being—to the inaccessible with which we associate.<sup>11</sup>

Art is dialogue, for it actualizes the Other within mutuality. Just as nature can realize an intrinsic striving for completion through art, so mankind can actualize its intrinsic striving toward perfected relation. That is the basic principle of Buber's philosophical anthropology of art. The artist meets the world in its brute formlessness; from this distance and duality—the experience of a non-human other—can emerge a new being, an esthetic reality enjoying a human meaning within its own particular beauty. Buber's esthetics has been summarized thus by Louis Hammer:

Beauty is a mode of being of things in dialogue with the senses of man. Things that are called beautiful present themselves from the fullness of their being, and they require the person open to encounter. Beauty is the meeting between man and the sensuous presence of something in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Buber's dialogical theory of art (which Hammer applies to painting, sculpture, and music) can be readily confirmed by experience: the spectator and the spectacle do establish a reciprocal meeting within esthetic contemplation. Though this dialogue is an artifice, it is lived; and the beauty perceived outside of ourselves enriches our sense of belonging in the world. Esthetic experience enhances our participation in nature, created forms, and may occasion deeper communication with fellow humans as well as with our own hidden inwardness.

But what of poetry, that paradoxical kingdom of solitude and sharing? Poetry is the borderland between human speech and nature's silence. (To anticipate slightly, poetry bridges artistic and religious faith.) Buber believes that all of the arts, except poetry, reach completion at the price of a "productive shrinking of the world to the exclusiveness of a single sphere [of space and time]."<sup>13</sup> Poetry is unique, in Buber's view, for it

does not originate from one of the senses' standing over against the world, but from the primal structure of man as man, his primal structure founded upon sense experiences and overarched by the spirit's power of symbols, of language.

The essence of poetry, as of its creator, is dialogue.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

12. Louis Z. Hammer, "The Relevance of Buber's Thought to Aesthetics," in Schilpp and Friedman, p. 621; see the whole essay, pp. 609–628; this subject needs much further exploration.

13. *Knowledge of Man*, p. 162; the next quotation is from p. 163.

Poetic language transcends the limits and particularity of the five senses, of space and time, because it sustains the essential function of "the word that is spoken." Poetry contains within it the trace of speech, despite the fact that it originates in the poet's essential inwardness. And speech "reaches toward a hearer, it lays hold of him, it even makes a hearer into a speaker, if perhaps only a soundless one."<sup>14</sup> Both the thinker and the poet illustrate this paradox of the solitary dialogue. But while "the thinker is originally more solitary than the poet, . . . he is not more solitary in terms of his goal. Like the poet he is turned toward without turning himself." The impulse to write poetry, or think, in this perspective, realizes a "striving toward language." Yet the thinker seems more susceptible to "a monologizing hubris" than the poet. Often missing in self-elaborated philosophical discourse is precisely "the ontological basic presupposition of conversation . . . the otherness, or more concretely, the moment of surprise." How does poetic discourse turn the isolated poet, as a person, toward the world?

Reading and writing poetry are gratifying, in part, because we feel enveloped in a universe which emanates from the center of our subjectivity. Buber, however, stresses the intrinsically communal dimension of language. Poetry, like spoken conversation, requires betweenness. Words carry within themselves a human history, which he calls "potential possession, . . . the totality of what has ever been uttered in a certain realm of language."<sup>15</sup> That is why words, especially in poetry, can be ambiguous:

[Ambiguity] constitutes living language. . . . The ambiguity of the word, which we may call its aura, must to some measure already have existed whenever men in their multiplicity met each other, expressing this multiplicity in order not to succumb to it. It is in the communal nature of the logos as at once "word" and "meaning" which makes man man and it is this which proclaims itself from of old in the communalizing of the spoken word that again and again comes into being.

Paradoxically, the solitude of poetic creation or reading rests upon the foundation of a language which, by its very nature, conveys human fellowship. This tension, this polarity of shared "meaning" and spontaneous "word," constitutes the powerful mystery of poetry as simultaneous loneliness and communion.

Buber concludes that, within its solitude, poetry is essentially "spokenness, spokenness to the Thou, wherever this partner may be."<sup>16</sup> Poetry thus exemplifies the positive polarity of distance and relation:

The coming-to-be of language also means a new function of distance. For even the earliest speaking does not, like a cry or signal have its end in itself; it sets the word outside itself in being, and the word continues . . . And this

14. *Ibid.*, p. 112; the next two quotations are both from p. 113.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 110; the next quotation is from pp. 114–115.

16. This quotation and the next one are from *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118.

continuance wins its life ever anew in true relation, in the spokenness of the word. Genuine dialogue witnesses to it, poetry witnesses to it.

The person and language cooperate reciprocally in the process of coming-to-be. Words have an individual history and an autonomous power of transformation, as do persons. Poetry realizes this reciprocity most freely because its Thou remains silent, pure in its infinite potential. A double turning-toward is realized in poetry and its impact seems in no way compromised by its necessary incompleteness. Why this happens remains unclear. Buber's explanation that the essence of both mankind and language is a striving toward relation may not suffice. The domain of ultimate distance and relation, the religious, provides another testing ground.

### *The Eclipse of Faith*

Poetry realizes the potency of all art when it evokes the sacred. The created world of the senses and of free imagination ushers us into the dimension of the ultimate. Poetry imitates faith:

The truth of the word that is genuinely spoken is, in its highest forms—in poetry and incomparably still more so in that messagelike saying that descends out of the stillness over a disintegrating human world—indivisible unity.<sup>17</sup>

The craving for communion fostered by great art presupposes an insuperable separation from the Absolute, while the symbolic vehicle of art allows the transcendent and the human to converse. Poetry, most explicitly of all the arts, seeks to translate "that messagelike saying that descends out of the stillness." In an age dominated by God's silence, Buber's understanding of the language of faith renews religious meaning. He shares with atheists and free thinkers the experience of divine absence. But he interprets that experienced absence as the distance of a real God. The silence common to God and mankind makes living relation possible.

Mankind's estrangement from God, from the very possibility of absolute meaning, defies contemporary religion. Buber reinterprets the "death of God" as the crucial act in the human drama of otherness: "Eclipse of the light of heaven, eclipse of God—such indeed is the character of the historic hour through which the world is passing."<sup>18</sup> However, he does not conclude that the Reality of "God" no longer exists; rather, that mankind suffers from a stunted receptivity:

17. *Knowledge of Man*, p. 120. I have explored the relation between poetry, love, and faith in "Three Dimensions of Human Fullness," *JUDAISM*, 22, 3 (Summer 1973): 309–326, which the present essay continues.

18. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1952), p. 23; the next quotation is from pp. 23–24.



One misses everything when one insists on discovering within earthly thought the power that unveils the mystery. He who refuses to submit himself to the effective reality of the transcendence as such—our *vis-à-vis*—contributes to the human responsibility for the eclipse. . . . He who no longer is denoted by the name lives in the light of His eternity. But we, “the slayers,” remain dwellers in the darkness, consigned to death.

The theology of a dead or utterly inaccessible God is rooted in a human darkness; it testifies to the anguished incapacity to “experience a reality independent of ourselves.” Buber protests against false solutions to the emptiness that mankind inevitably must endure between itself and God.

Mystical experience, according to Buber, seeks to abolish the otherness of God. His repudiation of “mysticism” is complex and problematic, but his defense of the I-Thou character of a human/divine encounter remains valid.<sup>19</sup> For Buber, the mystic’s goal of absorption in, or identification with, God is fundamentally narcissistic. This type of mysticism is a form of “empathy” which “means, if anything, to glide with one’s own feeling into the dynamic structure of an object . . . the absorption in pure aestheticism of the reality in which one participates.”<sup>20</sup> Unification, in this view, denies the essential separateness between the individual and God. The *feeling* of communion achieved excludes otherness: “[union with the godhead is] nothing but the unity of this soul of mine, whose ‘ground’ I have reached.” Buber’s polemic against mysticism warns us that an exaggerated spiritual inwardness can become a vast, systematic denial of God’s inescapable distance. He rejects mysticism so that the lonely, alienated individual will not relinquish his or her autonomy or despise the multiplicity which makes true relation possible.

I do not agree that mysticism must be narcissistic and earth-negating. Buber’s biased definition does a disservice to this rich and varied tradition. Indeed, his interpretation of Hasidism as the sanctification of the everyday belies his blanket condemnation. Jewish and Christian mysticism, on the contrary, maintain a powerful link with prophetic and moral commitment.<sup>21</sup> Buber limits his characterization of “mysticism” to the absorption stage, in which the human personality feels merged with the Absolute. However, the fruits of absorption include the enhancement of the individual personality in greater freedom of will and action. Nor is

19. See Hugo Bergman, “Martin Buber and Mysticism,” in Schilpp and Friedman, pp. 297–308. This complex issue needs reevaluation: start with *Knowledge of Man*, chap. 4, “What Is Common To All”; M. Buber, *Pointing the Way* (Harper Torchbooks, 1957), “With a Monist,” “The Teaching of the Tao,” pp. 25–58; M. Buber, *Daniel* (1913) cited by Walter Kaufmann in his translation of *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), pp. 146–147, note 9; Buber’s critique of mysticism in *I and Thou*, pp. 125 sqq., 134 sqq., 177–182. It all returns to the incident recounted in “Dialogue,” *Between Man and Man*, pp. 13–14.

20. *Between Man and Man*, p. 97; the next quotation is from p. 25.

21. I have traced the path from mystical illumination to prophetic responsibility in “Mysticism and Despair in Abraham J. Heschel’s Religious Thought,” *The Journal of Religion*, 57, 1 (January 1977): 33–47. The pattern of Buber’s own life, despite his renunciation of “mysticism,” is also exemplary.

absorption in God always cherished by mystics. Buber's fundamental protest against narcissism, remains, nevertheless, valid and urgent. The often harsh awareness of God's otherness helps people locate those parts of reality outside of themselves. Religion, to be authentic, must discover meaning and holiness within the distance between humanity and the Eternal.

How is religion possible in our age of Godsilence? How can divine otherness buttress sacred meaning? Worship, the moments of fullest intimacy with—or distance from—the divine, provides an answer. We have seen that, for Buber, the solitary act of poetry actualizes “the spirit’s power of symbols, of language” as potential dialogue. Prayer, in particular, the written and spoken words of ancient faith, turn us, meaningfully, toward the Beyond. He explains:

We call prayer in the pregnant sense of the term that speech of man to God which, whatever else is asked, ultimately asks for the manifestation of the divine Presence, for this Presence’s becoming dialogically perceivable. The single presupposition of a genuine state of prayer is thus the readiness of the whole man for this Presence, a simple turned-towardness, unreserved spontaneity.<sup>22</sup>

Our power to evoke God is limited to the extreme; yet, as Buber succinctly summarizes, “he who is not present perceives no Presence.” Religious tradition can only nurture the “readiness of the whole [person].” We can expect no more.

Buberian “readiness” demands wholeness (that is, individual autonomy) and the capacity to trust. We are able to love only when we trust the other, that which is objectively foreign to our desire for total satisfaction. The life of faith reflects this human truth. Otherness is the foundation of faith as of authentic human love. Religion reposes upon this paradox: “God desires that men should follow His revelation, yet at the same time He wishes to be accepted and loved in His deepest concealment.”<sup>23</sup> Buber’s faith exemplifies his doctrine of trust and it is bold: “For when man learns to love God, he senses an actuality which rises above the idea. . . . the love itself bears witness to the existence of the Beloved.” Our obligation is two-fold: to strive for individual wholeness and to trust the beyond, unconditionally, be it human or divine.

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Friendship and love, art and poetry, and religious devotion all participate in a turning toward the Other which exalts our existence. Yet

22. “God and the Spirit of Man,” in *Eclipse of God*, p. 126; compare Abraham J. Heschel, “On Prayer,” *Conservative Judaism*, XXV, 1 (Fall 1970): 1–12, with Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 59, 130–131, 167.

23. “The Love of God and the Idea of Deity,” in *Eclipse of God*, p. 60; the next quotation is from p. 62.

what situation do we face? Faith and confidence in mankind and its God have been shattered repeatedly, perhaps irreparably. Evil, banality, and moral callousness stalk civilization and define our image of humanity. Hedonism and self-concern are at war with the lucid and compassionate search for human authenticity and cooperation; utility and formalism outstrip the wonder of beauty; while institutional self-interest and triviality continue to menace religion. Buber requires us to build upon the real duality of human existence. His mission is that of the teacher described in "The Education of Character":

To keep the pain awake, to waken the desire—that is the first task of everyone who regrets the obscuring of eternity. It is also the first task of the educator in our time.<sup>24</sup>

In living the pain of essential otherness we bear witness to the reality of meaning and love. Martin Buber's lifetime fidelity to this calling sustains our trust, despite anxiety, that separateness purifies our intimacy and that God's silent expectation invigorates our drive toward holiness and peace.

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24. *Between Man and Man*, p. 111.

# *Buber, The Man of Letters*

RUTH LINK-SALINGER

*Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten, Band I: 1897–1918; Band II: 1918–1938; Band III: 1938–1965.* Verlag Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg, 1972, 1973, 1975.

THE JEWISH WORLD PAUSED ONCE BEFORE—in 1928—on the occasion of Buber's fiftieth birthday, to give written tribute and to pay academic homage to his cultural contributions. In true reverence to the traditional dictum: "*Ben ḥamishim l'eizah*" ("Age Fifty: to give counsel") Buber's collaborator, Franz Rosenzweig, gathered a collection of textual studies as a Festschrift, *Aus unbekannten Schriften: Festgabe für Martin Buber*; another collaborator, Hans Kohn, wrote a definitive and path-breaking analysis entitled *Martin Buber—sein Werk und seine Zeit—ein Versuch über Religion und Politik*; and the important German-Jewish journal, *Der Jude*, published a *Sonderheft zu Martin Bubers fünfzigstem Geburtstag*. The contributions to the Rosenzweig volume were exceedingly brief and crisp; the genial character and reputation of the contributors was a *Who's Who* among intellectuals in the Weimar period. The essays in the *Sonderheft* of *Der Jude* were of customary length; the list of contributors included Scholem, the Weltsches, Bergmann, Kohn and Simon, all of whom had been represented in the *Festgabe*, but the topics were along those lines on which Buber had "given counsel" and had elected himself a counselor.

For all of the years of his literary productivity, ever since his first essays on the *littérateurs* of the Viennese *fin-de-siècle* (Peter Altenberg, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Artur Schnitzler, as well as the critic, Hermann Bahr), published in 1897-98 in the Polish journal, *Przegląd tygodniowy*, Buber has attracted and interested a wide, cosmopolitan, and eclectic circle of *dévotés* and has fascinated and inspired a much smaller coterie of his "chosen" in the Zionist movement, in the worlds of Jewish learning and institution-building, and in ecumenical and humanistic concerns. The Weimar period produced one spare doctoral dissertation of note, presented by Simon Maringer, a Polish Jew from Krakow, to the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Zurich in 1936.<sup>1</sup>

No Jewish theologian has written as much as Buber. No Jewish theologian has brought along, and after him, as much evaluation and study as has Buber. No Jewish theologian has been as widely translated. Few have dared to approach the multiplicity of areas of concern and

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1. *Martin Bubers Metaphysik der Dialogik im Zusammenhang neuerer philosophischer und theologischer Strömungen (Darstellung und Kritik).*

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observation, of study and of searching as has he. It is not the purpose of this review to trace this literary productivity; it is, instead, to give some importance and weight to the periodization of Buber assessment and to place it in perspective. This can be done by observing with what care the post-Hitlerian periods pick up and transmit Buberiana. The first anthology of note is Buber's own *Hinweise: Gesammelte Essays* (published in Zurich in 1953), a collection of definitive short pieces from the years 1909–1953. Perhaps the most beautiful among these is the autobiographical fragment “*Mein Weg zum Chassidismus*,” a piece which is for reading aloud on Saturday afternoons, at the waning of the day, when the pious are moved to wistful chants rather than to hymns. It has been said that Heschel's *The Sabbath* is the eulogy of Polish Jewry; if that be so, then “*Mein Weg zum Chassidismus*” is a melody at twilight for that Central-European German-Jewish bi-culturism for which Scholem has censored the word “symbiosis.”<sup>2</sup> The second contribution of note is Moshe Catanne's *A Bibliography of Martin Buber's Works 1895–1957*, published for the eightieth birthday by the Bialik Institute of Jerusalem, and containing at least ten items or more for every one of the honoree's eighty years.

The sense of history and posterity becomes stronger and more marked after Buber's eighty-fifth birthday. His three-volume *Werke* appear, carefully gathered topically as Biblical, Chassidic and Philosophical, as does his own in-gathering entitled *Nachlese*, which includes an all-too-brief “*Erinnerung*,” summarizing themes never elaborated upon for long enough anywhere. Definitive for this time is Ernst Simon's “*Martin Buber und das deutsche Judentum*,” the first contribution in the book, *Deutsches Judentum: Aufstieg und Krise*, edited by Robert Weltsch for the Leo Baeck Institute. The fantastic and only photograph in the book, recording a meeting of Buber and Baeck in London, in 1947, shows a slightly shabby, middle-middle-range intellectual and a carefully groomed, aristocratic aesthete, whose God had miraculously restored him from the level of dray horse on a Theresienstadt garbage wagon to his former rabbinical work. The critic, musing on this picture, would be reminded, in summarizing Buber's *Briefwechsel*, that it took Buber forty long years in the fertile fields of his theoretical Zionism to flee to Israel in the late 1930s, whereas it took Baeck only a very short time to decide to remain with the trains of Jewish Berliners traveling by special Nazi dispensation directly to Theresienstadt and points closer to Eternity.

Of lasting significance in this period is the well-known volume of the Library of the Living Philosophers, *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, edited by Paul S. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman in 1967, the German edition of which had appeared, interestingly enough, several years earlier in Munich. Picking up essentially where Hans Kohn had left off in his

2. See the three essays in his *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*: “Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue,” “Once More: The German-Jewish Dialogue,” and “Jews and Germans.”

assessment of 1928, Grete Schaeder wrote a volume in 1966, *Martin Buber: Hebräischer Humanismus*, for which she interviewed Buber on several trips to Jerusalem. An academic curiosity of these years is the tiny *Martin Buber: L'homme et le philosophe*, published in 1968, linking Buber to the thought of French contemporary theology. As yet almost entirely overlooked is the work of Wolf Dieter Gudopp, *Martin Bubers dialogischer Anarchismus*, published simultaneously, in 1975, in Switzerland and Germany, which links Buber to ideologies mentioned in some detail in this writer's *Gustav Landauer: Philosoph of Utopia*, (though the book was not accessible to this writer.) It was still given Buber to read proof on his *Nachlese* and to write a "Reply to my Critics" for the fine volume of the *Philosophy of Martin Buber*, which is a major and important introduction and summary of the thought-world that is Buber.

The appearance of the three-volume *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, put out in Heidelberg, between 1972 and 1975, by Buber's chief publisher, Lambert Schneider, has caused a stir in European literary circles and wherever intellectuals read German with ease. It is a work of magnificent scope and of exquisite scholarly detail and conception. Grete Schaeder, who is technically the editor of the volumes, has written a long and interesting introduction summarizing her earlier *Martin Buber: Hebräischer Humanismus*. Ernst Simon, with understated finesse, has limited himself here to a classical "*Geleitwort*." Those who know the director of the Buber Archives of the Hebrew University, Margot Cohn, formerly Buber's secretary, can almost sense her secret touches; Gabriel Stern is responsible for the careful and meticulous scholarly aids which these volumes contain; Rafael Buber, the only son, also contributed his help.

The organization of this mammoth task must have been significantly influenced by Buber's experience as executor of the literary *Nachlass* of his murdered friend and associate, Gustav Landauer, the great philosopher of twentieth century European socialism. He spent ten years, 1919—1929, in this venture and the Buber Archives in Jerusalem have long letters in which he set up guidelines for what was to be included and what omitted. Some very "strong" decisions were made on what to leave out.

In his "*Geleitwort*" to the Buber *Briefwechsel*, Simon attests to the fact that when Buber asked him to serve as literary executor of his works, he specifically indicated that he had no wish to have his letters serve as a legacy of his personal life. With great accuracy and scholarly purity, Simon informs the reader, right at the outset, that letters pertaining to private life are sparsely represented, and, furthermore, that of the many exchanged by Buber and friends, only those were selected which pertained to concerns and issues of the "public interest."

The Martin Buber whom Ernst Simon transmits to posterity is a public personage: a public posture, a public style of letter-writing, and a public set of concerns, issues, and literary dialogues. The *Briefwechsel*, as bequeathed by the literary imaginations of Simon, Schaeder, Cohn, Stern

and Buber is the prototype of the “living Buber at work.” In some of the letters, a reader sensitive to the informative, open, and well-rendered style can almost see the man at work. He was his own typewriter. We are informed that, until well on in years, Buber wrote regularly and, by choice, by hand. The reproductions of the letters show that firm German style in a polished, elegant, steady handwriting, which must have been carefully mastered in young years, to be rendered in such perfection in old age. Most of the letters that are printed here are of the length which Europeans of an earlier age considered appropriate for formal correspondence, i.e., distinctly longer than the American business letter. It must have been a decided, orderly action, combined with friendly courtesy to write them on a regular basis. Not to mention those letters which plan projects or discuss issues of ideology and controversy, and which are longer. One also suspects that if Buber wrote letters by hand, much of his other work may have come to us in that way also. The careful reader of German style and idiom meets, in these volumes, a man for whom human contact in the act and the art of writing was a disciplined sport of the highest order, for whom dialogic situations and the meeting of minds-at-work were, clearly, carefully conceptualized activities of the human intelligence.

Those who have given us this legacy have exercised their sharp, critical talent and sense for stylistic authenticity by wielding the finality of the “three dots” (. . .) at every point at which a letter might stray into an area which might escape their watchful attention. Many letters are cut at the very point at which shadings become interesting. The casual intellectual reader may feel that nothing has been lost, but the careful student or specialist of a given *métier* may find that he can draw no final conclusions about many relationships and issues precisely because he will never be able to judge how much has been censored before inclusion and how much is missing of those materials which have been shortened. We are not told what percentage of the Buber archives was published, though perhaps a later generation will make more available, more extensively, more completely. The editors have done what they were bidden and have shielded those alive and those with special interests and sensibilities. One should not be niggardly in a scholarly sense and should appreciate what has been given, but it is important to point out that it is a part and that we have no statement about which part and how much of the total.

The volumes follow the chronology of Buber's life and work. The first treats the period from 1897—1918, the years of activity in the literary and theatrical life of Berlin and Vienna, of Buber's serious commitment to the Zionist and socialist movements as they were variously understood, of his collaboration with his wife, his studies of mysticism and of Chassidism and his publication of early Chassidic texts. Those who know of his efforts on behalf of the newly emergent theater of the people (Maurice Friedman's 1969 *Martin Buber and the Theater*, gives important background



material), those who have an interest in his collaboration with various anarchist and utopian circles, and those who have followed his interesting relationship with his father, grandparents, and wife will grant with only great regret that Buber was right in keeping out all personal material. Perhaps his young years were a time of meeting-in-person-rather than of writing, perhaps many political letters were destroyed, perhaps others were ideationally no longer suitable in the Israel of the 1970s. One would have wanted more; one would have wanted illustrations of the fascinating development of a Jewish intellectual emerging from the house of a talented, rabbinic scholar-grandfather into the vibrant renaissance-and-renewal atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Europe. Of special interest for this writer were the exchanges with Herzl,—of more than passing significance for the history of modern Zionism. The quiet, repressed anger of the elitist Herzl under fire from, respectively, Buber and Aḥad Ha-am (for different ideological reasons) as it shows itself in the letters is a subject for connoisseurs. The exchanges with Weizman and Feivel are bits of living legacy of the Zionist movement. In his letters to Ernst Elijah Rappeport, a secondary figure who, surprisingly, occupies a major role in all of the volumes of the anthology, Buber emerges as a psychological mentor, guide, and pathbreaker. For this quality of being a “*Führer*” and “*moreh derekh*” he was often praised by the men of his generation. We are to see this quality again in the exchanges with Gerson and with Maurice Friedman, who turned to Buber for personal and scholarly direction.

Textscholars will delight in the choice tidbits from the letters exchanged with Agnon and Scholem regarding a joint effort to establish an archive of Chassidic texts. Unfortunately, a fire in Agnon’s library in Hamburg brought an untimely end to this high-minded collaboration. The exchanges with Landauer are many, but not significant. The letters to and from Hans Kohn attest to Buber’s great importance in shaping the Prague Bar Kochba student organization, whence came many of the learned leaders of the Central European-German-speaking Zionist intelligentsia who shaped Palestine. Their historian is yet to emerge. The letters to Arnold Zweig, an early collaborator in that innovative Zionism in which Buber pontificated “*Wir brauchen keine Revolution. Wir sind die Revolution*” (We need no revolution. We *are* the revolution.) are of special significance for students of literature. Other letters show Buber’s interests in general and Jewish education, and in the cause of peace, once it had become clear that the Germans would not be effective in winning the World War I edition of the *Blitzkrieg*. There were bitter exchanges between Landauer and Buber on the attitude toward German national and military patriotism, but these are not published in this collection. What is in Volume I of the *Briefwechsel* is literary contact with several members of the *Forte Kreis*, a group of European men of good-will, who constituted themselves a *Bund* across belligerent lines. The history of this group is also yet to be written. Buber’s participation in the editorial direction of *Die Welt*

and of *Der Jude* also emerges as an important aspect of Volume I.

Volume II treats the two decades from 1918 to 1938, the period of Buber's conceptualization of the translation of the Bible into an unmediated modern German, his several years as co-editor of the ecumenical, humanist *Die Kreatur*, his institution-building for Jewish adult and scholarly education in Frankfurt and Jerusalem, his ten years as literary executor of the Landauer *Nachlass*, his fatherhood of the mature years, his slow ripening toward *aliyah* and his immigration to Israel. The years were crowded and busy, full of movement and decision-making. Landauer had been murdered and Rosenzweig was to die a tortuous death. Buber must have been deeply involved in the passing of both of these men to whom he had been bound in his youth and middle years respectively. With Landauer he had shared the movements of social regeneration: *die neue freie Volksbühne* and *die neue Gesellschaft*, Landauer's *sozialistischer Bund*, the conceptualization of Buber's many volumes of the series, *Die Gesellschaft*, devoted to philosophical anthropology and philosophical sociology. Both had had a lively interest in medieval religious mysticism, language criticism, and free anarchist-socialism of the anti-Marxist type. To Rosenzweig, Buber was bound in an examination of the divergent truths of Christianity and Judaism, in a careful testing of normative and dissenting traditions in Judaism, in a weighing of the mandates of the Biblical and the Rabbinic sources of their common religious heritage. In these years Buber took possession of the leadership mantle which a generation of Western youth had thrust upon him. He brought experiences from years of Jewish history unknown to them and from writings not easily available to them. Buber, equally son of Vienna, Lemberg, Berlin and Frankfurt, had to build ideological bridges to modern Palestine for *Werkleute*, Hapoel Hazair, and Hashomer Hazair equally. There are searching letters from Ernst Joël, from Michael, Gerson, and Weltsch in this context. The letters to Scholem continue: about texts, scholarship, offers to come to Jerusalem. The faculties of the Hebrew University found Buber a figure not easy to digest: his person and personality had facets and affiliations that were not entirely common to Jewish theologians, scholars, and potential Israelis. He preached a Jewish religious commitment and a religiously committed sense of community with which his own lifestyle was curiously at odds. The letters from Hugo Bergman, especially, show affection, concern, and sensitivity. Magnes writes with care and diplomacy. Eventually, a title and métier are found; the pressure of the stature of Buber's international reputation, the persistence of Scholem and Bergman, the innovative character of Buber's work, and the dangers of life in Nazi Germany overlap significantly to bring him finally to Jerusalem and to The Hebrew University.

This is where Volume III picks up and runs on to 1965, the year of Buber's death. This writer found the letters in this volume *to* Buber more moving than those which came *from* him. This is natural. In the slim

volume, *München ehrt Martin Buber* (1961), Schalom Ben-Chorin describes briefly the strains which Buber encountered in Jerusalem, a city to which he was at once tied by the culture which he had helped to shape and from which he was alienated by the language and the thought-world from which he had fled, and which were, indeed, the rightful inheritance of his Munich-born, Christian wife. The letters from Switzerland of the theologian, Ragaz, during the period of "the death of the gods of Europe" in the 40s are one large ache. But there are also letters of a peculiar hope. Perhaps the most beautiful of them is a very long one, written by Fritz Rothschild from Rhodesia, in 1943, outlining, by way of pensive questioning, the role that Buber might play at that dark hour for the survival of Jewish peoplehood and learning. Buber was then sixty-five, the news of the extermination camps was already out; and the most immediate concerns for the lost wealth that had been his father's estate had begun to disturb him seriously. But he worked on tirelessly. He did not answer Rothschild very effectively in the exchange of letters, but he did answer. He learned Hebrew, concerned himself with bi-nationalism and with increased activities for Jewish-Arab rapprochement. The letters are poignant documents of those serious efforts. There are bitter lines in several of them about the shape of Jewish nationalism in this period. There are scholarly exchanges with Herberg, Glatzer, Kaufmann. Increasingly, Buber sensed, understood, and used the opportunities which a revitalized American Jewish center provided; he built bridges to American scholars, especially Maurice Friedman, whose respect for Buber and whose admiration for his work underlie the correspondence.

In the 50s, Buber accepted an invitation from the Jewish Theological Seminary. The invitation by Louis Finkelstein and the acceptance by Buber are civil, courteous, but cautious in style. Here was an opportunity for Buber to make contact with the wealth of learning and the authenticity of scholarship on Morningside Heights, yet one senses that some of the questions which Jewish Jerusalem asked would be asked again at the Seminary. The same caution is reflected in the letters of the 50s, to and from institutions of higher learning and cities of note in post-Hitler Europe. Buber, the Polish Jew from Vienna, resident of modern Israel, had chosen to make himself the uneasy bridge for the meaningful rapprochement of a generation of Germans and other Europeans, men of good and honest intention, who had been passive bystanders, or not yet grown to maturity, while millions had gone to their undeserved doom. Throughout all of the travel, the written word marches on. Volume III is crowded in an effort to be fair to a man of many tasks in a world newly alive with possibilities. For a genuine assessment of these years one must go back to the earlier pages of this essay, devoted to the 50s and 60s as years of ingathering.

Scholars, students and intellectuals alike will find the publication of the *Briefwechsel* a worthy prolegomena to the centenary.

# *American Jews and the Business Mentality*

EDWARD S. SHAPIRO

AMERICAN JEWS HAVE HAD AN AMBIVALENT attitude toward financial success and commercial acquisitiveness. On the one hand, their rapid economic mobility over the past seventy-five years, which far exceeds that of any other major American ethnic group during this period, has enabled them to escape from the slums and radically to transform the occupational structure of American Jewry within two or three generations. The fervent desire of the first generation of East European Jews that their children not enter the sweatshops or not live in tenements has been fulfilled beyond their wildest expectations, and much to the surprise of the American Geman Jewish community which initially viewed the East European immigration as largely consisting of *luftmenschen*, *schmorrers*, and the physically debilitated. While rapid Jewish social, economic, and occupational mobility has become a staple of American sociology, there is, nevertheless, a tendency among many American Jews either to ignore it or to refuse to recognize its source.

Some Jews have even gone out of their way to deemphasize or deny that American Jews are now "haves" rather than "have-nots." Embarrassment over widespread evidence of Jewish affluence lead Jewish spokesmen in the 1960s and 1970s to stress the existence and persistence of Jewish poverty. Not only did many of these seekers after Jewish poverty exaggerate its extent, but they often ignored its transitory character. In contrast to the poverty of other American ethnic groups which has existed over several generations and has created what Oscar Lewis termed a "culture of poverty," Jewish poverty is largely limited to the elderly, to recent immigrants, or to the extremely pious. Jewish poverty is not a social condition which is passed on from generation to generation. Many of the poor Jews of south Miami Beach who are living out their last years on meager social security checks have children who are doctors, lawyers, and professors. Indeed, one of the psychological burdens carried by the elderly Jewish poor is the recognition that they have been largely forgotten by their successful offspring whose concern is limited to a visit or two a year and a phone call once a week.

While most informed American Jews, however, recognize the fact of American Jewish financial success, there is no widespread awareness of the reasons for this success. Perhaps the most generally held explanation is that American Jews took advantage of available educational opportuni-

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ties, particularly the university and, especially, the fabled City College of New York. CCNY has assumed in American Jewish folklore a position comparable to that of the playing fields of Eton and Harrow. The fact that Russian Jewish immigrants in Latin America, the British Empire, and other areas where educational opportunities were not so easily available also experienced the same rapid economic mobility should have made the CCNY explanation rather suspect. And, in fact, recent historical investigation has demolished the belief that scholastic achievement can account for American Jewish success. Professor Selma Berrol has shown that, prior to World War I, most American Jews did not even finish high school, much less go on to college, and that CCNY was far too small to account for any significant portion of Jewish mobility. In 1913, for example, there were only two hundred and nine graduates of City College, and it was not until the 1930s that the college was large enough to be a route of upward mobility for many Jews. By the 1930s, moreover, Jewish ascent had already been well underway, as seen in the large number of Jews who had been able to move from the Lower East Side. The Jewish population of the ghetto peaked well before World War I, and Jews continued to leave the area throughout the post-World War I era. The Lower East Side housed 353,000 Jews in 1916, but only 121,000 in 1930. The CCNY explanation, therefore, fails to account for the social and economic mobility of the first generation, and it is only a partial explanation for the ascent of the second and third generations.<sup>1</sup>

An alternative, and more reasonable, explanation has been the ability of East European Jews and their descendants to take advantage of the economic and entrepreneurial opportunities offered by American capitalism. The East European Jewish immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were overwhelmingly oriented toward business. In many areas of East Europe, Jews virtually monopolized commerce. The most frequently voiced criticism of them was their "parasitic" economic character, and many Jewish reformers encouraged the transformation of Jews into "productive" farmers and artisans. While these strictures overlooked the many Jewish artisans and the fact that hundreds of thousands of East European Jews had been proletarianized by the late nineteenth century, they correctly recognized that business was central for them.

The goal of most Jewish immigrants upon settling in America was to open their own business, and it was only as a temporary expedient that they entered the working class. The intense labor union activity in the New York ghetto early in this century was a response, not only to the wretched working conditions of the sweatshops, but, also, to the dissatisfaction of Jewish workers at being workers at all. The Jewish immigrant

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1. Selma C. Berrol, "Education and Economic Mobility: The Jewish Experience in New York City, 1880-1920," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXV (March, 1976): 257-71.

working class was, in fact, a bourgeoisie temporarily existing as a proletariat. The social characteristics of the Jewish working class, such as sobriety, temperance, frugality, willingness to defer gratification, and commitment to education, are those generally associated with a mobile middle class.

While the East European Jewish immigrants possessed precisely those traits conducive for success, they would have been for naught if the American economy had not provided them a hospitable environment for exercising their talents. Not only was the American urban economy burgeoning at the turn of the century, but there were no artificial barriers to enterprise. Licensing regulations, minimum wage laws, and other government impediments to enterprise and social advancement did not exist, and the labor movement in the garment industry and other Jewish-oriented industries had not yet achieved its position of strength. As a result of the openness of the economy and their own commercial orientation, East European Jews gravitated toward business to a greater extent than did other immigrant groups.

"The Lower East Side developed a fervent commercial life," writes Moses Rischin, "infused with a vitality that made it something more than a mass of tenements." It was this "fervent commercial life" which, more than anything else, was responsible for Jewish social and economic mobility. "Jews joined the mainstream in seeking success through business," says Professor Thomas Kessner. "And indeed among the first generation immigrants it was not medicine, law or even their vaunted thirst for education that carried them forward. It was business." The same statements could be made of their children and grandchildren. The economic opportunities provided by the sweatshops and a much maligned capitalism have enabled the grandchildren of the immigrants to criticize the economic system from the safety of their homes in Woodmere and Great Neck.<sup>2</sup>

But while the first generation tended to act as capitalists, they tended to think as radicals. The most popular Yiddish newspaper was Abraham Cahan's secular and socialist *Forward*. The Lower East Side was one of only two places ever to send a socialist to Congress, electing Meyer London in 1914. The Jewish labor unions were generally socialist in ideology, and almost all of the first-generation ghetto intellectuals were either anarchists or, more frequently, socialists. To this day, American Jewish social action organizations are to the "left," and support a social and economic program which, it could be argued, has more relevance for Vilna of the 1890s than for contemporary America. Indeed, American Jewry has almost a knee-jerk attitude toward business and capitalism, an attitude

2. Moses Rischin, *The Promised city: New York Jews, 1870-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 1970), p. 36; Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 65.

which has mystified conservatives and been a godsend for countless liberal causes and organizations.

This contempt for business has been a central motif in the recent resurgence of interest in American Jewish history, particularly the nostalgia for the immigrant generation and the old Lower East Side. The movies and books purporting to describe the "world of our fathers" have presented a picture at odds with the perceptions of the Jews who actually lived there. The residents of the Lower East Side, for instance, recognized that they were living in a slum and they expended all possible efforts to escape from it. When Jacob Riis stated that thrift, "the watchword of Jewtown," was "its cardinal virtue and its foul disgrace," he was noting the willingness of Jews to scrimp and save in order to escape from the oppressive overcrowding of the ghetto. They were under no illusions about the Lower East Side. For them it was neither quaint nor colorful.

One of the classic pictures of the Lower East Side as slum was *Jews Without Money*, published in 1930 by Michael Gold, a Communist and resident of the ghetto. His description, when compared to later analyses such as Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers*, clearly reveals the change in the Jewish radical sensibility. There is no sentimentality or nostalgia in Gold's portrait. Everything about the ghetto disgusted him. Not only did he exaggerate its social misery, but his Marxism prevented him from appreciating the difficult, but yet important and partially successful, struggle of traditional Jewish religious and cultural values to take root in America.

Modern portraits of the East Side and the European *shtetl*, however, are concerned less with condemning them than with recapturing their spirit and outlook. Some of this is an understandable quest for identity on the part of individuals for whom the East Side is, at best, a vague memory. The pithy formula of Marcus Lee Hansen, the historian of American immigration, that what the son wishes to forget the grandson wants to remember, explains some of the current interest in the early years of the East European Jewish settlement. This interest, however, involves something more than an understandable search for roots. The Lower East Side has become not merely a geographical location but also a standard by which to judge, evaluate, and censure modern American Jewry.

This is not the first time that the Lower East Side has been used in this way. At the turn of the century, many native Americans frequented the ghetto ("slumming" we might call it) in search of the excitement and local color which their own culture did not provide. The two most famous were Lincoln Steffens and Hutchins Hapgood who, according to Ronald Sanders, "saw in the life of the Russian Jews a cultural integrity and vitality" lacking in American culture. The modern view of the *shtetl* and the Lower East Side, as presented in *Fiddler on the Roof*, in Mark Zborowski and



Elizabeth Herzog's *Life Is With People*, and in the recently published volumes of photographs of *shtetl* and Lower East Side life is that of an anti-suburb.<sup>3</sup>

Suburbia is, after all, the habitat of the modern Jewish businessman who has "made it." For the modern Jewish intellectual, the memory of the ghetto is a welcome contrast to the ostentatious materialism, spiritual vacuity, and aimlessness which supposedly characterize modern Jewry. The Lower East Side is idealized because of its intellectual intensity, its socialist politics, its working class culture, and because the immigrant generation never completely surrendered to bourgeois values. It has been romanticized to show just how far America's Jews have moved away from the ideals of their immigrant ancestors and have been enveloped within the commercialism and materialism of modern America.<sup>4</sup>

One is struck, in viewing recent films about American Jewry, by their pervasive anti-business sentiments and by their exulting in the world of the ghetto. The ostentatious wedding and Bar Mitzvah scenes in *Goodbye, Columbus* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the wealthy but morally flawed uncle in *The Gambler*, and the corrupt businessmen in *Save The Tiger* reflect the distaste for successful Jewish businessmen. When Duddy asks his uncle why he never had time for him, the uncle answers, "Because you're a pusherke. A little Jewboy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed." Duddy is a caricature of the capitalist hustler.

This animus toward business is perhaps best brought out in the overly praised *Lies My Father Told Me*. The theme of the film is the struggle between the father and the grandfather for the mind of the young boy, David. Harry, the father, is pictured as the quintessential second-generation Jew fleeing from the world of his father-in-law, and especially from Orthodox Judaism. He is the extreme materialist who has made money and social mobility his gods. He is continually thinking up inventions, like expandable cuff links and creaseless pants, which will enable him to escape from the Montreal ghetto. He views his father-in-law's religion as "nonsense," saying to him, at one time, that "for you the world is still waiting for the Messiah." "Zaideh" makes his living by traveling through the narrow alleys of Montreal purchasing rags, clothes, and bottles. David often accompanies his grandfather on these journeys and they frequently discuss religion and the coming of the Messiah. Zaiden personifies the effort of traditional religious and cultural values to survive in the face of the corrosive impact of materialism and the dream of capitalistic success. The film, while sympathetic to the grandfather's world, reluctantly recognizes that the future belongs to the Harrys.

3. Ronald Sanders, *The Downtown Jews: Portraits of an Immigrant Generation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 219.

4. Marshall Sklare, "The Sociology of Contemporary Jewish Studies," in Sklare, ed., *The Jew in American Society* (New York: Behrman House, 1974), pp. 19-25.

The film, *Hester Street*, also has as its major theme the conflict between the values of traditional Yiddishkeit and the attraction of materialistic America. The movie's central figure is Jake, whose major goal is to be accepted as a "real American fella." Though living in this country for only three years, Jake has been thoroughly Americanized. He has changed his name from Yekl to Jake, he wears a salon derby, he punctuates his conversation with words about the latest happenings in the world of sports, and he spends his evenings at Peltner's Dancing Academy in the company of the beautiful and Americanized Mamie. A cloud, however, comes into Jake's life, with the arrival from Europe of his wife, Gitl, with their son, Yossele. Although Jake does succeed in changing his son's name to Joey and cutting his earlocks, he is unable to do much with Gitl, who holds on tightly to the religious customs and superstitions which she acquired in Europe. Everything about her reminds Jake of his old life, especially the wig which she insists on wearing, despite his strenuous objections. Jake's embarrassment with Gitl soon turns to contempt and then loathing. He is also at odds with his boarder and fellow worker, the Talmudist, Bernstein. Jake teases Bernstein for studying the Talmud, and for being a "greenhorn." Bernstein, in turn, curses Columbus, and says that when a Jewish immigrant leaves for the United States he should cry out to God, "Goodbye, O Lord, I'm going to America." The film ends with Mamie and Jake going to city hall to be married, following Jake's divorce, and with Gitl and Bernstein making marriage plans of their own after Gitl will have fulfilled the waiting period required by Jewish law of a female divorcee. They talk of opening a grocery store which Gitl will operate while Bernstein continues studying Talmud.

Everything about *Hester Street* is designed to portray traditional Jewish immigrant life in as favorable a light as possible, but, to quote Stanley Kaufmann, it is "phony to the eye," since it fails to convey any sense of the poverty, filth, and deprivation of the Lower East Side. As a result, the viewer is unable to comprehend why Jake would choose the meretricious and Americanized Mamie over Gitl, nor is he able to understand, much less sympathize with, Jake's desire to escape the ghetto and become a "Yenkee."<sup>5</sup>

Another important recent attempt to portray immigrant Jewish culture prior to its seduction by materialism is Irving Howe's volume, *World of Our Fathers*. The book's jacket describes the work as an analysis of "the journey of the east European Jews to America and the life they found and made," a rather inaccurate account, since Howe's six hundred and fifty pages of text contain little, if anything, on the petty capitalist outlook of the immigrant generation. There is no mention of a David Sarnoff, but there are long accounts of the labor lawyer, Joseph Barondess, the

5. Stanley Kaufmann, "Stanley Kaufmann on Films," *New Republic*, CLXXIII (October 18, 1975): 21; Robert F. Horowitz, "Between a Heartache and a Laugh: Two Recent Films on Immigration," *Film and History*, VI (December, 1976): 75.

socialist politician, Meyer London, and the Yiddish literary critic, Shmuel Niger. According to Howe, the Jewish immigrants found and made a life revolving around Yiddish culture, socialist politics, and the Jewish labor movement. Certainly this is part of the truth, especially in New York City. But, along with this, there was the passion to flee from the ghettos, the hunger to climb the economic and social ladder, and the eagerness to seize the economic opportunities provided by America. Abraham Cahan, that sounding board of East Side life, reflected this immigrant ambivalence. Not only was he editor of the *Forward*, the most important American socialist newspaper, but he was also the author of *The Rise of David Levinsky*, the classic picture of the *parvenu* immigrant Jewish businessman.

American Jews, Howe claims, can look back to the immigrant world for "images of rectitude and purities of devotion." But devotion to what? For Howe, the essence of immigrant Jewish culture was

a readiness to live for ideals beyond the clamor of self, a sense of plebeian fraternity, an ability to forge a community of moral order even while remaining subject to a society of social disorder, and a persuasion that human existence is a deeply serious matter for which all of us are finally accountable.

If this strikes Jews as a rather extravagant description of the motives of their parents and grandparents, it is because Howe is not writing about the average Jewish immigrant. *World of Our Fathers* is an elitist interpretation of the Lower East Side written by a Jewish intellectual who became a socialist at the age of fourteen and an editor of a socialist weekly when he was twenty-one. Most Jewish immigrants, I maintain, were not overly concerned with what Howe sees as the essence of the Yiddish cultural experience in America: "the messianic impulse of secular Judaism" and the discovery of "modes of conduct" in order to "establish a genuine community." The one overpowering goal for most immigrant Jews was, "My children shall not work in the shops."

Jews can take pleasure, Howe writes, "in having been related to those self-educated workers, those sustaining women, those almost-forgotten writers and speakers devoted to excitements of controversy and thought." Can't Jews also take pleasure in the businessmen and artisans whose enterprise and hard work enabled the immigrant generation to leave the ghettos, and can't Jews be grateful to the immigrant generation for passing on to their descendants middle-class virtues and ambitions which would stand them in good stead? *World of Our Fathers* is an elegy on the old East Side and, like all elegies, it abstracts from our memories those qualities of the deceased that it would most like to be remembered. A history of the world of our fathers, however, must make room for the Sammy Glicks and the David Levinskys as well as for the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire and the pioneers of the Yiddish stage.

Howe's interpretation of the Lower East Side experience is infused

with a wistfulness totally lacking in Gold's *Jews Without Money*. While Gold believed that a "garden for the human spirit" could emerge out of the destruction of the ghetto, Howe laments the rapid obliteration of the Yiddish cultural and socialist values occurring as a result of the dissolution of the old East Side. This difference should not, however, obscure Howe's basic agreement with Gold regarding the insignificance of the nonradical aspects of Jewish life on the East Side. A case in point is Howe's virtual ignoring of religion. There is no discussion of the growing and importance of Yeshiva University for the ghetto, nor is there any reference at all to the yeshivot of the Lower East Side, such as Moshe Feinstein's Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem on East Broadway or the Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva on Henry Street. In addition to his slighting of religious traditionalism, Howe also passes over the Zionist activity of the ghetto. Indeed, it could be argued that *World of Our Fathers* focuses on the most transitory aspects of Jewish life on the East Side, while disregarding precisely those elements which, since they have been able to weather the migration to suburbia, have proven to be the most lastingly important.

There is something ironic, indeed, about the second and third generation who, safely ensconced in suburbia, nostalgically yearn to recapture the intellectual intensity, the spirit of community, and even the radical politics which were supposedly the hallmarks of the immigrant ghettos. Seventy-five years ago German Jews in America questioned whether the Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe could make it economically and culturally. Now the descendants of the Russian immigrants question the value of their success and acculturation. The contrast between *Hester Street* and *Lies My Father Told Me*, and films of the 1920s that feature Jews, reveals the extent of this cultural alienation from contemporary America. Movies like *Bleeding Hearts*, *The Heart of the Jewess*, *Child of the Ghetto*, and *The Jazz Singer* associated the ghetto with poverty and ethnic parochialism, and stressed the benefits of assimilation and social mobility. Today, when many have become cynical about mainstream American culture, it is natural to sentimentalize the immigrants who were not yet affluent and had not moved to suburbia. Jews, in particular, have become what Dan Isaac has called "a mythic symbol for ethnic survival."<sup>6</sup>

American Jews will have to come to terms with their history if Jewish identity and cultural pluralism are to rest on more than mere sentimentality. Jews will have to recognize that their history encompasses Inland Steel as well as the I.L.G.W.U., Revlon as well as Delancey Street, and Federated Department Stores as well as Jacob Adler. American Jewish identity will have to rest, in part, on the recognition of American Jewry's persistent middle-class character and on the acknowledgement of the enormous benefit that America's Jews have derived from American capitalism.

6. Dan Isaac, "Some Questions About the Depiction of Jews in New Films," *New York Times*, September 8, 1974; David Weinberg, "The 'Socially Acceptable' Minority Group: The Image of the Jew in American Popular Films," *North Dakota Quarterly*, XL (Autumn, 1972): 63-65.

# *Studying the Holocaust's Impact Today: Some Dilemmas of Language and Method*

ALICE and ROY ECKARDT

THE WRITERS ARE AT PRESENT STUDYING certain limited aspects of the contemporary aftermath of the Holocaust. Stress falls upon that event's continuing interpretations and reputed lessons in our time, a generation after the death centers and concentration camps were freed. More precisely, emphasis is placed upon the current state of affairs within Germany and other parts of Europe, as well as upon the situation within Israel. The present restricted and preliminary discussion concerns itself with a few basic conceptual and procedural problems faced, not alone by us, but by all who engage in such study. Accordingly, we should benefit from critical responses to our own tentative understandings and procedures.

## *"Die Endlösung"*

Although we are not dealing with the event of the Holocaust as such,<sup>1</sup> we can hardly escape or ignore divergent views of the nature and meaning of that reality.

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1. An authoritative history of the Holocaust years is by Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975). The title is not sufficiently discriminating; Dawidowicz concerns herself with the destruction of Jews in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Baltic countries and, very limitedly, Western Russia. Only briefly considered in an appendix are Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, and Western and Northern Europe (areas with a pre-war Jewish population of no less than two and a half millions). For an informative survey of Hitlerism and Nazi Germany, with sections on the persecution of Jews, the SS and the ideological basis of its mentality and command structure, the concentration and death camps, and the mass executions of Russian war prisoners, consult Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Anatomy of the SS State*, tr. from the German by Richard Barry, Marian Jackson, and Dorothy Long (London: Collins, 1968). A thorough study of the deportation of Jews from Germany, with emphasis upon the kind of bureaucracy that reduces human beings to virtual robots, is the magnum opus of Hermann G. Adler, *Der Verwaltete Mensch, Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr), 1975. See also Saul Friedländer, *L'Antisemitisme Nazi: Histoire d'une psychose collective* (Paris: Seuil) 1971, and Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973 [1968]). For a fine collection of testimonial literature from, during, and after the Holocaust, see Albert H. Friedlander, ed. *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

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The German Nazis determined upon *die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Europa* ("the final solution of the Jewish question in Europe"). This formulation was officially put forth on the 20th of January, 1942, at a conference at Gross-Wannsee, although the actual decision had probably been earlier.<sup>2</sup> The Wannsee agreement was simply the logical consummation, or merely gave expression to, a resolve whose roots are traceable to 1919, when Adolf Hitler declared that his ultimate objective was "the removal of the Jews altogether." According to the minutes of the Wannsee Conference, the 11,000,000 Jews of all Europe were marked for death.<sup>3</sup> Yet it is misleading to comprehend the Holocaust solely within the *Aktion* of killing.

The *Endlösung* means that everything is permitted, that any and every method is to be utilized in the struggle—indeed, in the *enjoying* of the struggle<sup>4</sup>—to obliterate the single pestilence that is destroying the entire world: the Jew. The German Nazis taught that the Jew is the *Untermensch*, the contaminator from below. Accordingly, his "name" is taken away; he does not deserve one; he is only the number tattooed into his flesh.

The *Endlösung* is the competitive "race of the dead" at the killing center of Treblinka and elsewhere, a physiological competition that makes one man's survival absolutely dependent upon the next man's extinction. For the "race of the dead" decreed which prisoners would be murdered and which ones "spared."

At the heart of the *Endlösung* is the utilization of Jews as officially-determined agents to revile and torture their fellow-Jews. The Jew is turned into the accomplice of his executioners. The *Endlösung* is ultimate degradation. It is the attempted dehumanization of the Jew and the torture-process that makes it possible. The *Endlösung* is total mental, physical, and spiritual breakdown. It is the ontic separation of children and parents, wives and husbands. Child, parent, wife, husband—all are enforced witnesses to the suffering and annihilation of their loved ones.

The chronology of *das perfide System* (Jan Bastiaans) was: Declare the Jew to be the *Untermensch*; then make certain he is this, thereby vindicating your major premise; and only then, kill him. In this respect, the *Endlösung* had nothing to do with the specific advent of death, for the ultimate shamefulness lay in staying alive. Objectively speaking, death was transfigured into a form of mercy. Death became salvation—although, of

2. So Gerald Reitlinger argues; cf. his *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1961), p. 102. Raul Hilberg speaks of the fateful step across the "dividing line" that inaugurated the "killing phase," and he refers to two all-decisive orders by Hitler in 1941 that were to doom all European Jewry (*The Destruction of the European Jews* [Chicago: Quadrangle Books, rev. ed., 1967], pp. 177ff.).

3. Of these, the Nazis succeeded in destroying about 6,000,000. It is not possible to furnish exact figures. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem) estimates the number at 5,820,960.

4. Abel J. Herzberg illustrates this aspect of the truth in his essays on Bergen-Belsen: *Amor Fati, Zeven opstellen over Bergen-Belsen*, 3. druk. (Amsterdam: Moussault's Uitgeverij, 1950).

course, the *manner* of death incarnated the dehumanization and was the mirror image of the terror. It is often said that the nightmares of the captives were perhaps more frightening than their encounter with death.

Speaking of life in the Vilna Ghetto, Abba Kovner (who helped to lead the uprising there) attests that the most appalling thing was not death but being defiled to the depths of one's soul every hour of the day.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the ultimate in attempted dehumanization was the Nazi effort to obliterate the Jews and Jewishness from all human memory. At the same time, we are not allowed to forget the complicity of those people and nations other than the persecutors themselves. There is much truth in Elie Wiesel's judgment that the victims suffered more "from the indifference of the onlookers than from the brutality of the executioner."<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Haft writes that the futility of the agony is contained in the words, *et ils savaient que vous ne pleureriez pas* ("and they knew that you would not weep").<sup>7</sup>

Again, the *Endlösung* reached out even to those who gave the appearance of surviving it. Many could not endure the shock of "liberation." They died. For vast numbers of those who lived, the years after liberation were as dreadful as, or worse than, the horror of the camps. Most sadly, some no longer retained the strength that human beings are required to muster if they are to be happy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, to be freed was, in many cases, not to be freed. How could these people adapt to a life that they had lost? Many lacked the power to retrieve their former world, a fight that would demand enormous inner resources. Even those with some strength left found that the old world was gone. Their loved ones and friends, their homes and their countries—all these had been destroyed.

There is the valley of the shadow of death. And there is the *Endlösung*: the valley of the historical dehumanization, terror, agony, and final murder of the Jew, only because he is a Jew. But we cannot exclude, and we are not permitted to forget, the historic resistance of the Jew to the war against him. For a light burns within the shadows: the German Nazi campaign to dehumanize the Jewish people failed. Jewry as a whole refused to fall to the level of the *Untermensch*. Only the real *Untermenschen* did that, the enemies of the Jews.

### "Holocaust": Accepted but Questioned Concept

In various countries the term "Holocaust," with its counterparts in different languages, has not gained total recognition as a means of iden-

5. Abba Kovner, "A First Attempt to Tell," unpublished preparatory paper for International Scholars Conference on the Holocaust, New York, 3-6 March 1975.

6. Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Avon Books, 1968), p. 229.

7. Cynthia Haft, *The Theme of Nazi Concentration Camps in French Literature* (The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1973), p. 133.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 153.



tifying the reality whose aftermath occupies us, although that word is being utilized more and more. A major objection to it is that, within its historically original frame of reference, the concept designated a totally burnt or consumed offering. (Some victims of the Nazis were, of course, burned, but most were murdered by other means.) It would be infamous to identify these human beings as offerings or sacrifices. This is not to ignore the sublime fact that many Jews did sacrifice themselves for the sake of others (as did some non-Jews).

A further objection is the imprecision of "Holocaust," in partial contrast, for example, to a term often employed in Germany: *Judenvernichtung*, the annihilation of the Jews. Imprecision is found as well in the Hebrew concept of *Shoah* (destruction, catastrophe), although in Jewish circles and in Israel that term is widely applied to the Holocaust. The major difficulty with it is its implication of a kind of impersonal fatality. (English-using scholars in Israel and elsewhere now customarily employ "Holocaust.")

Imprecision also appears in certain other Hebrew words sometimes utilized to stand for the Holocaust. The French scholar, Bernard Dupuy, refers to the habitual word *Shoq*, which evokes the idea of catastrophe or cataclysm. Again, there is *Hurban*, which, like *Shoah*, signifies destruction or ruin, although in this case a specific application has traditionally been made to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Various French terms involve the same difficulty of imprecision, and there is an added problem. Two words that appear in French and correspond to the customary meaning of *l'holocauste* are *olah* and *qorban*. (These are simply transliterations from the Hebrew originals.) We indicated the problem above: both concepts connote, in varying ways, the idea of a sacrificial offering. Père Dupuy concludes that some Christian authors manifest an excessive tendency to comprehend "*la Shoah*" (*Ha'Shoah*) in a sacrificial sense.<sup>9</sup>

Although *holocauste* is a French word, many French interpreters (with others) use the improperly selective, though powerful, symbol, "Auschwitz." The Nazi concept, *die Endlösung*, as used above, is justified only in the interest of grappling, as though from inside Nazi demonry itself, with the total, eschatological nature of the *Judenvernichtung*.

Among Germans, the word "Holocaust" is still unfamiliar, and there is no specific counterpart in the German language. However, in *Christen und Juden*, a recent study officially adopted by the Council of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD, the Protestant church in Germany), recognition is afforded the term, and a discriminate definition is supplied: "the annihilation of a great part of European Jewry through National Socialism."<sup>10</sup>

9. Bernard Dupuy, "Un théologien juif de l'Holocauste, Emil Fackenheim," *Foi et Vie* (Paris), 73e année, No. 4 (Septembre 1974), p. 12n. Père Dupuy is Secretary of the French Bishops' Committee for Relations with Judaism.

10. *Christen und Juden, Eine Studie des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Gütersloh:

Due to the wide and increasing acceptance of the wording "the Holocaust," there appears to be little choice but to utilize it, although always with a certain unease. The EKD definition is not perfect: it communicates nothing of the systematic, technological, and official character of the *Judenvernichtung*. Again, as pointed out above, the *Endlösung* means infinitely more than "killing." "Annihilation" must be taken to encompass the total process of the war against the Jewish people. And the concept of the Holocaust must always be extended to the great acts and spirit of resistance to that would-be destruction.

The imprecision of the various words previously enumerated is partially relieved when the definite article is attached; e.g., *Ha'Shoah*, *the destruction*; *the Holocaust*, *the burning* or *annihilation*. Capitalization is of further help; we are not here concerned with "holocausts" (a word often applied to such acts as the thermonuclear burnings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki). In belles-lettres, as elsewhere, the word "holocaust" has come to be employed loosely and, thereby, somewhat misleadingly.<sup>11</sup>

It must be stressed that, behind any seeming pedantry of the foregoing paragraphs, there loom momentous human questions. For example, what is the relation of *the Holocaust* to different "holocausts," to other acts of human destruction? *This Holocaust*—in what ways is it unique?

### *Dilemmas for the Analyst*

A student of the Holocaust and its aftermath may exhibit a form of clinical, detached objectivity.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, there is the approach of a participant, *un homme engagé*, an interpreter who insists that detachment is the adversary of human obligation. Along which path is the investigator of today to make his journey? Or may he succeed in traveling both of the roads? Perhaps it is useful to include an autobiographical note, not for personal reasons, but because it bears upon the methodological dilemmas that pervade our subject and, also, because of the requirement of fairness.

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Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Möhn, 1975), S. 53. The word "annihilation" (*Vernichtung*) in the EKD statement is particularly apt, in contradistinction to the oft-used "extermination." A colleague in the United States, Bernard Mikofsky, properly objects to "extermination" because of its implied or unconscious sanctioning of the German Nazi contention that Jews are subhuman: we speak, for example, of exterminating rodents and roaches. "Annihilation" is the more objective word.

11. The novelist, R.F. Delderfield, uses the lower-case form of the word simply to epitomize the Second Great War (*To Serve Them All My Days*, Book 2 [London: Coronet Books, 1973], p. 370). Martin Middlebrook reads back the concept "holocaust" into the First Great War, as cited in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York-London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 82.

12. Raul Hilberg's work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which restricts itself to the Holocaust as such, is often singled out as an illustration *par excellence* of this outlook. Not unrelated to the point is the fact that Hilberg comes to the *Endlösung* as though from the standpoint of its perpetrators rather than of its victims. We say "as though" because Professor Hilberg is the foe of everything Nazi. His work remains authoritative.

It was in an intellectual-experiential way that the present writers came to the particular issue of the Holocaust, its meaning and its consequences. This occurred after having attended, for a number of years, to the historical, ideational, and moral relationships between Christianity and Judaism, between Christians and Jews. Although it is the case that a beginning study in the latter general realm was prepared back in the immediate post-Holocaust time (1945-1947), the effort was not primarily a response to the Nazi *Endlösung*, even though it did deal somewhat with that reality and it sought to grapple with anti-Semitism, especially Christian theological anti-Semitism.<sup>13</sup> The bare truth is that we did not come to the subject of the Holocaust, nor earlier to that of Christian-Jewish relations, through any traumatic personal encounters within, or even outside, the Europe of 1933-1945. Rather, it was the anti-Jewish problematic within Christian teaching and the history of Christianity that finally led us, perhaps inexorably, to the Holocaust.

The last thing we should ever imply is that direct participation in, or victimization by, the *Endlösung* makes the survivor incapable of comprehending and of placing the evil within a broad and deep frame of reference. On the contrary, such direct confrontation may be of crucial aid in the achievement of a "theory" of the event, in the highest sense of that term. Jacob Robinson points out that the judgments of some authors are weakened by the fact that they never experienced the Holocaust (or any other mass disaster). Many writers did not even follow closely the development of the *Endlösung*.<sup>14</sup> Many who suffered in the Holocaust but who somehow managed, or were enabled, to survive it have attained, especially with the distancing years, a kind of creative objectivity in their very descriptions and assessments of Nazism.

Wherein, then, lies the relevance of our own accounting? There is the danger that the Holocaust will be appropriated only as a nightmare, a horrible episode that erupted within a brief span of years as part of a special ideological development or political tragedy or whim of an insane man, a nightmare from which we have long since awakened. There is the temptation to reduce the *Endlösung* to an aberration, a kind of cultural-moral mutation. In consequence, a needed comprehension of the event as the logical and even inevitable climax of a lengthy and indestructible ethos-tradition and theological obsessiveness may be lost. Against this, we must root ourselves in the fateful past—a possibility that has only of late gained a foothold within scholarly circles, and within and beyond the Christian church. We seek for the grace that may derive from a certain

13. A. Roy Eckardt, *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948). The volume was based upon a doctoral dissertation composed under the supervision of Reinhold Niebuhr.

14. Jacob Robinson, assisted by Mrs. Philip Friedman, *The Holocaust and After: Sources and Literature in English*, Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Authority, Jerusalem, and Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, New York, Joint Documentary Projects, Bibliographical Series, No. 12 (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), p. 323.

historical perspective, from a kind of distancing that is, at the same time, nearness. Captivation by, and concern for, the centuries-long story of anti-Semitism, and particularly the anti-Semitism that is fatefully linked to one's own religious tradition, will produce, it is hoped, at least three results: it will aid us in avoiding a facile approach; it will help to foster a concerned objectivity; and it may offset, a little, the personal condition of having passed the Holocaust years at a protected distance.

Those who contend that one must have been a part of the horror in order to write of it face the difficulty that no written word can equal the experience itself. It is a Holocaust survivor, and not some mere onlooker, who has written: "Perhaps, what we tell about what happened and what really happened have nothing to do one with the other."<sup>15</sup> True, the non-participant's writing is at least twice removed from the reality. However, the participant's writing remains once removed. In both cases there is a break with noumenal truth.<sup>16</sup> This is not to disagree that, in principle, a qualitative difference obtains between literature that is once removed and writings that are twice removed.

To those who say that you must have been within the inferno in order to approach it and write of it, we can only respond, with Cynthia Haft, that "we too want this event, so unique, never to be forgotten, that we too feel obliged to join with them in their efforts to remind others and to bear witness, without in any way violating the sanctity of the subject matter."<sup>17</sup>

We trust that the struggle against false objectivity is carried forward in some measure through the elements of personal encounter upon which our own current studies are grounded.<sup>18</sup> There is no way to separate one's acts as a human being from one's work (without falling into a certain personality split). The two elements are bound together within the larger category of "calling" (*vocatio*). Objectivity without commitment contains

15. Elie Wiesel, "Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future," JUDAISM, XVI, 3 (Summer 1967): 283.

16. Cf. Immanuel Kant's teaching that the noumenal world forever eludes us, in contrast to the world of phenomena.

17. Haft, *The Theme* . . . , p. 11.

18. Our present research entails four kinds of methods: (1) The consulting of written materials (books, monographs, published and unpublished papers, journal and newspaper articles, belles lettres, and group pronouncements) that have appeared, for the most part, within recent years, and particularly since 1970. (2) The utilization of oral history techniques. Within various countries in Europe and also in Israel we have arranged a large number of such sessions, interviews in depth entailing a great amount of give-and-take. There have been meetings with psychiatrists and psychologists, historians and literary figures, philosophers and theologians, government and religious officials, pastors and rabbis, editors and journalists, teachers and university students, and also persons who fit none of these categories but were commended to us for one or another reason (survivors of the Nazi camps, resistance fighters, teenagers who were studying a pertinent book in school, *et al.*). Some of the more rewarding encounters have involved "ordinary" persons encountered by seeming happenstance. (3) A further device originated as a concession to time and place. We distributed, by post, a large number of inquiries to appropriate parties in different parts of Europe, individuals and organizations that we probably would not be able to visit. A personal letter was sent explaining the subject of the research and its significance and asking the recipient to write out answers to eight questions. One of three languages was employed in

temptations—most lamentably, those of neutrality and coldness. This condition must be fought. The objectivization of the Holocaust, i.e., the removal of, or the refusal to make, evaluative judgments about the event, constitutes, in effect, a justification of the German Nazi program. One either opposes Nazism or he supports it; the bystander, by default, ranges himself on the side of the supporter.

It is a fact that the very study of the Holocaust's aftermath becomes, inevitably, part of that aftermath, part of *Existenz*. There is objectivity for the sake of truth, and subjectivity for the sake of goodness. Truth and goodness are not separable.

A further moral complexity appears. Allusion is made above to the German Nazi device of setting camp inmates in competition for their very survival. We ourselves do not totally escape a related kind of evil whenever we call attention to the testimonies and records of certain sufferers but not to those of others. For all representations of the testimonial literature<sup>19</sup>—not excepting those made by compilers or interpreters who are themselves survivors—are inevitably caught up in judgments of value: this piece is “better” than that piece, or is at least “more memorable” than that one, or at least this one is to be called to public attention instead of that one. Cynthia Haft observes that, unfortunately, the mere fact of having been in a concentration camp, or of having learned what happened to others there, does not necessarily bestow literary talent on a writer or create a work of art. In her study, *The Theme of Nazi Concentration Camps in French Literature*, she dwells upon those writings “whose extraordinary literary value distinguishes them from the mass.” Why are value judgments and acts of selection essential respecting the mass of writings? Because, so Haft argues, the phenomenon of the concentration camps can penetrate the individual and collective consciousness of our time only

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each communication (German, French, or English). The addressee was usually a party of some public influence and was often possessed of prior interest in the subject—a colleague whose comments and opinions we should probably value. Communications were sent to the same kinds of persons as those encountered in the oral history meetings. The people who were involved in both the oral history research and the written inquiry comprised a non-random, carefully chosen, and broad sample, though by no means a poll-taking one. It was emphasized that confidentiality would be fully respected. We are quite aware that people often write (or say) what they wish the world to believe. With our project, this has been a potential problem. For example, there are persons whose past history and associations with Nazism are not wholly untainted. There is the added and general possibility of ambivalence toward questioners. In our case this has meant (a) Americans; (b) possessors of support from an opulent American foundation; (c) gentile Christians. (4) Added sources of information and ideas have derived, and are continuing to come, from membership in national and international conferences, participation in casual social gatherings, attendance at lectures in various countries, and the viewing of films, dramatic productions, and television programs. Everyone knows that movies, television, popular books, and plays exert an immediate social impact that greatly excels the potency of companies of scholarly works.

19. The phrase “testimonial literature” is used to cover writings of those who met their death under the German Nazi persecutors and also of those who suffered but survived. The term extends to memoirs, poetry, diaries, stories, lamentations, contemplative writing, calls for help, and eyewitness accounts.

through the vehicle of outstanding literature. "Only when this phenomenon has become a literary theme, a poetic theme, will its intense ramifications be felt. The power of language is to contain and transmute all passions, all human experiences of men."<sup>20</sup> Only great literature will truly give expression to this power. (We may anticipate that some of the Holocaust writings will become part of the *torah*, and perhaps even the *Torah*, of tomorrow.)

The literary scholar, Lawrence L. Langer, apologizes for having regretfully omitted from consideration such works of unusual distinction as Piotr Rawicz's *Blood From the Sky* and Charlotte Delbo's *None of Us Will Return*.<sup>21</sup> This apology is as essential as the one we ourselves are obliged to make in conjunction with our own work—and it fails to meet the moral problem just as surely as any explanation that we could marshal. All of us act in a way that keeps the memory of one witness alive and lets another's die. Insofar as the non-participant in the Holocaust cites this witness and not that one, he shares the same fault as that of the present analysts who, with Haft and Langer, are not survivors. The only person who does not enter into this fault is the death camp inmate who wrote in a purely testimonial way and not in a competitive way, and then died or removed himself from literary effort. Once an individual who has survived engages in the latter kind of effort, he has become a part of the dubious arena of competition, of the battle that every "writer for publication" knows, of the fierce world of author egos.

In sum, none of us is devoid of sin. The only question is: Which sin is peculiarly ours? We who write about the Holocaust today are all, in a sense, the profiteers of torment.

A further word is in order respecting the testimonial literature. These writings tend to fixate themselves, properly and understandably, upon death and victimization. But, as we have said, the terrible world of the Holocaust also encompasses acts of resistance to the terror. Here is one important reason why concentration upon great portions of the testimonial literature must be balanced by attention to historical analyses and, especially, to more recent historiography with its important finding of spiritual and moral resistance, and of armed Jewish struggle against the Nazi foes.<sup>22</sup> However, any differentiation between the testimonies of helpless sufferers and the accounts of resistance and resistance heroes is a

20. Haft, *The Theme* . . . pp. 10-11, 189. Haft identifies these works as "masterpieces of the deportation:" Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Avon Books, 1960); Charlotte Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, (*None of Us Will Return*) (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1970); and Jorge Semprun, *Le grand voyage* (*The Great Journey*), (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

21. Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. xiii.

22. Cf., e.g., Yehuda Bauer, *They Chose Life: Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: Institute of Human Relations, American Jewish Committee; Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University, 1973); Yuri Suhl, *They Fought Back: The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968); Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe* (London: P. Elek, 1974).



highly relative one. The line is thin. Considerable testimonial literature recounts acts of resistance, while, on the other side, honest historiography is called upon to chronicle the powerless suffering and the annihilation.

An additional problem is tied to the bafflement that many have confessed before the *Judenvernichtung*. They ask: How is the unspeakable to be spoken about? Certainly, we ought to speak of it, but how can we ever do so? Again, how are we to engage in scholarly work upon a subject that staggers the mind and stabs the soul, or ought to do so: the human effects of *this* crusading-political-technological annihilation of an infinity of children, women, and men? Irving Greenberg once said in our hearing that the basic lesson of the Holocaust is that there are no lessons.<sup>23</sup> From this stand-point, the *Endlösung* is too shattering for us to learn anything from it and, accordingly, even to reckon with it.

Are we bereft of a means for coming to terms with the Holocaust? Many interpreters have concentrated upon what is, for them, the incomprehensibility and total irrationality of the event, as against the claim that it is somehow meaningful, or at least that something can be learned from it. We do no prejudice Professor Greenberg's conclusion when we point out that the noumenal or ostensibly mysterious character of the Holocaust is one thing, while the consequences that the event has had and is having within human life and thought are quite something else. Greenberg's own asserted bafflement is exemplary of the second of these categories. We allude now to the phenomenal impact of the Holocaust, noting the aptness of the ambiguity in the concept "phenomenal:" the word has come to mean "powerful" and "decisive" while also retaining its philosophical connotations of "empirical" and "observable."

The available or parsimonious way to adjudge what the impact of the *Endlösung* may be upon an individual or a collectivity is through empirical availability or nonavailability. (Non-impact is as much a part of the historical and scientific question of the Holocaust's aftermath as is positive impact.) We simply study the evidence. The phenomena may be exhibited either volitionally or non-volitionally, directly or indirectly. In many cases we have to probe for meanings and implications that lie below the surface.

The fine novelist, Cynthia Ozick, has declared that the Holocaust is already dangerously literary, dangerously legendary, dangerously trivialized to pity, and the pity to poetry.<sup>24</sup> She properly reminds us of the embarrassment of available literary and documentary riches on our subject. On the matter of legend, it is true that the human proclivity to mythologize the past is universal and sometimes dominating. But we do not believe that pity trivializes the Holocaust, unless, or until, it becomes the exclusive response. (Whether pity is trivialized in poetry, we do not

23. Irving Greenberg, "Lessons to be Learned from the Holocaust," unpublished paper at Hamburg Holocaust Conference, 8-11 June, 1975.

24. Cynthia Ozick, "The Uses of Legend: Elie Wiesel as Tsaddik," *Congress Bi-Weekly*, XXXVI, 9 (9 June 1969): 19. Cf. Wilfred Owen, referring to the First Great War: "My subject is war, and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity."



have the capacity to judge.) However, the real stumbling block to agreement with Ozick is that we are forced into literature, legend, pity, and poetry in the very acts of observing and guarding against the dangers in these and other pursuits.

The imponderability and *mysterium tremendum* of the Holocaust, together with varied calls for silence before its unspeakableness, have not prevented the production of a multiplicity of materials on the subject. In this respect, our problem is not so much how to speak of the unspeakable, but, instead, how to confront and reasonably assimilate an incredibly large body of published literature, documents, and testimonies as, at the same time, we seek out living people and fresh interpretations and dare to venture interpretations of our own.

As with any powerful historical development, data that reflect the continuing impact of the Holocaust are mediated to the scholar through varied ways of understanding. If this state of affairs makes for a pluralistic coloring in much of our own work, and if it suggests findings and judgments that are at best tentative and uncertain, these results are made necessary by the vastness of the subject, its severely controversial aspects, and its many impalpable elements. Pluralistic understanding is associated as well with the kinds of questions that an investigator resolves to ask. Insofar as his interests center in problems of causation and social conditioning, he will turn to socio-historical or psycho-historical materials. If he is concerned with questions of meaning and value, he will turn to literary creations or to philosophic and theological sources. Yet the lines are always crossing, for the latter kinds of source are inevitably influenced by given social milieux, just as the former kinds of source are always conditioned by existential and moral experience. To set one type of approach qualitatively above the other is never very convincing.<sup>25</sup>

This brief discussion of linguistic and methodological dilemmas suggests the concept "phenomenology," a term which epitomizes the over-all approach that we are following in our current research. All ways of apprehending phenomena are fallible. We must strive for representativeness of an ideational, factual, and geographical kind. Yet it is impossible wholly to escape impressionism or to elude Alfred North Whitehead's dictum that all life proceeds by simplification. The work of any analyst of the Holocaust and its consequences entails an apprehension of selected data from varied standpoints, not excepting his own. The ambiguity in the word "apprehension"—standing, as it does, for both the claimed receiving of truth and a certain anxiety respecting the future, including in the present instance the anxiety over harming human beings through one's research and writing—invests that word with a certain fearful propriety.

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25. Cf. the discussion by Lawrence J. Silberstein, in Moshe Davis, *Contemporary Jewish Civilization on the American Campus: Research and Teaching* (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University, 1974), pp. 70-71.

# *Toward a Jewish Definition of Statehood for Israel*

DANIEL J. ELAZAR

FOR ALL ITS STRIVING FOR NORMALITY, Israel remains a curious kind of state, probably without any contemporary or modern parallel. Formally, Israel is built upon the modern European model of statehood which sees states as reified polities, existing apart from their citizens and sovereign in all things, the corner-stones of all political life and the primary focus of human loyalty (or, at least, that human loyalty which is not transcendent in character). Yet Israel, as a Jewish state, must inevitably reject that conception of statehood if it is to be true to itself and the purposes for which it was founded. Aside from the weight of the Jewish political tradition, which, though hardly recognized for what it is, still animates the attitudes and behavior of Jews towards political institutions including states, three principal factors force the rejection of European conceptions of statehood in practice, if not yet in theory, and require us to develop one more appropriate to the Israeli condition. They are: 1) the fact that Israel is the state of the Jewish people; 2) the fact that Israel is only one of the states in the Land of Israel; and 3) the fact that Israel as a state is a compound polity. The end result is to lead us in the direction of a definition of statehood which may be *sui generis* to the Jewish people, but which, at least in certain aspect, closely resembles the democratic conception of polity which prevails in the United States and other new societies.

## *Statehood and the Jewish Political Tradition*

Before closer examination of the aforementioned three factors, a word is in order about the idea of statehood in the Jewish political tradition. There can be no doubt that the idea of the Jewish people living independently in their own land stands at the heart of the Jewish political tradition; no matter how reckoned in the various traditional sources, the fulfillment of the *mizvot* in their completeness depends upon the existence of a Jewish polity in the land of Israel. At the same time, important as it is to enable the Jewish people to fulfill the tasks for which it was commissioned by the Almighty, the polity is not an end in itself. It is clearly a means to that end, but no more. Classical Hebrew reflects this. There is no generic term for "state" in the Bible or the Talmud. The term *medinah*

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occurs in both; in the former it refers to a province (or a state in the American sense), that is to say, a territory under a common *din* or jurisdiction, whose identity is marked by the existence of political institutions, but which is not independent and certainly not sovereign, in the modern sense of the term. It first appears in connection with Ahab's division of his empire; there the *medinot* are clearly no more than provinces, administrative districts with a minimum of autonomy. In *Megillat Esther*, the term is used to describe what today would be termed autonomous regions within the Persian Empire. In the Talmud, the term is used in a way that is even more vague from a political perspective, as in the case of *medinat hayam*. It is only in modern times that *medinah* is used to describe a "sovereign state."

In part, this terminological difference is reflective of the Jewish avoidance of the kind of abstract conceptualization for which Greek thought is noted. Thus, there is no generic term for "politics" in classical Hebrew. One consequence of this is that Jewish political thought does not fall into the error of suggesting that there is only one right political order. Hebrew and, therefore, the Jewish political tradition has a variety of terms for different kinds of political systems. What is characteristic of them all is that each focuses on a particular relationship between governors and governed. Thus, the rich political terminology of Biblical Hebrew describes relationships rather than "states," using terms such as *'edah* (which may be defined as a body or fixed assemblage of people with intense mutual linkages based upon a common law, or a partnership in which the whole people have a voice or an interest—in short, a commonwealth); *malkhut* (kingship); *mamlakhah* (dominion, perhaps empire); and *kahal* (assembly); terms which, primarily, imply certain kinds of actions and relationships and regimes or politics only by derivation.

In the Biblical view, peoples, nations and languages have the kind of permanent character as entities which states have in modern European political thought. What is not fixed for them is the form of regime or political structure under which they operate. Peoples, nations and languages are concrete, hence they are permanent; states are abstractions, hence they are identified only as they manifest themselves as regimes.

The basic reason for the Jewish rejection of state sovereignty in its European form rests with the strong Jewish conception that sovereignty reposes in God alone and that humans merely exercise delegated powers. Moreover, the Jewish political tradition has consistently held that, under the terms of the partnership established with God under the covenant, the primary delegatee of the power to govern the Jewish people is the Jewish people, either in its entirety or in conjunction with special delegates such as an *'eved Adonai* (minister of the Lord; e.g., Moses and Joshua); *shofet* (judge); *navi* (prophet); *melekh* (king) or *sanhedrin* (assembly). These delegates, in turn, establish regimes through covenants among the principal powerholders (and their delegates) within the terms established in the original covenant between God and Israel as embodied in the Torah.

Under such a system there can be no reified state, certainly no sovereign one. What there is, is a people which exists as a body politic as a result of powers delegated to it and which, in turn, establishes regimes by further delegating those powers.

Under such conditions, a state is a receptacle through which the true exercisers of sovereignty can establish political order but which has no life apart from them—something closer to a *medinah* in the Biblical sense. Perhaps the most accurate term for describing the classic Jewish polity is '*edah*'<sup>1</sup>, the term used to describe the polity established by Moses and by Jewish communities in every subsequent age (until the present when the term was distorted to acquire the new and misleading meaning of cultural subgroup within the Jewish people). In this context, the meaning of the expression '*am v'edah*' becomes more sharply focused; the two terms together combine the dual bonds linking the Jewish people, kinship ('*am*') and consent ('*edah*').

This political framework and orientation, which has its roots in the Bible itself, continued to be the dominant one in the Jewish political tradition, even during the years of exile. Even when outside authorities attempted to impose patterns of rule upon the Jewish people or upon some segments of it, as in Babylonia, the Jews found ways at least to redefine these patterns in terms of the set of relationships that is in accord with the Jewish political tradition. In the Middle Ages, when local Jewish communities had more autonomy in such matters, this framework and orientation was made clear in literally hundreds, if not thousands of *haskamot* and *takkanot*. The great debate of medieval Jewry as to whether communities can rule by majority decisions or require unanimity for decisions to take effect is a clear reflection of this conception of the polity as '*edah*'.

As Eliezer Schweid has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> it was only after Spinoza and under the influence of modern European political thought that the Jews began to grapple with the idea of the reified state. And, until the rise of Zionism, the concept found little place among those Jews concerned with political matters. Even within Zionist theory, there exists a great hesitancy to opt for statehood in that sense. Some Zionist theorists, such as Aḥad Ha-am, sought to avoid statehood in any case. Others, such as Martin Buber, who could see the necessity for political independence, developed a concept of statehood far more in keeping with the Jewish political tradition. Buber, indeed, drew heavily upon that tradition to express his own radical conception of what a Jewish polity should properly be.

1. The '*edah*' may be defined as the commonalty; the assembly of all males in the polity; in essence, the commonwealth. [The author has informed us that his discussion of '*edah*' "is based in no small measure" upon a paper by the Editor of this journal, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel," reprinted in Gordis, *Poets, Prophets and Sages*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 45-60. — R.G.]

2. See his paper prepared for the 1975 Summer Seminar on "The Jewish Political Tradition and its Contemporary Uses" of the Institute for Judaism and Contemporary Thought.

Whatever Zionist theorists may have desired, events created a general consensus among Jews that political independence was not only desirable but was achievable only through statehood. None of us is likely to regret that turn in the pursuit of the Zionist goal. The only question is what kind of statehood? Under what view or conception of the state?

In the early years of Israel's independence, a real effort was made to strengthen the institutions of the state. Ben-Gurion's well-known *mamlakhtiut* policy was part of that effort. While Ben-Gurion himself understood the limits of *mamlakhtiut*, the policy, as it gained currency, led to a certain tendency to idolize the state itself and, particularly, its most attractive instrument, the army. Subsequent events have turned Israelis away from that particular line of emphasis and have led them to reconsider the entire question of what statehood means in a Jewish state. In light of the special character of the state of Israel, that question should be a high priority item on the contemporary Jewish agenda.

### *Israel as a State of the Jewish People*

All of the evidence points to the fact that a very large majority of the Jews of Israel view Israel as the state of the Jewish people. Recently, the head of the Israeli government reaffirmed this view as the official policy of his government and of the state. True, there is a small but vocal minority among the Jews (not to speak of a rising chorus among the Arabs) that rejects this understanding of Israel as a state. But, no matter how vocal, it is small and appears to be growing smaller, having reached its high point (at least to date) in the late 1950s and early 1960s when *mamlakhtiut* was also at its apex. In those days, the trend toward the separation of Israel from the Jewish people was quite pronounced and had at least the latent sympathy even of much of the establishment.

Within the ranks of the very large majority who view Israel as the state of the Jewish people, there are two basic orientations: those who see the Jewish people of Israel as practically coterminous with the Jewish people and those who see the state as one unit, albeit the central one, within a larger Jewish people. The first group is mindful of the existence of a Jewish Diaspora, but considers it to be merely an appendix of the state, probably transitory in character, either because Diaspora Jews will be compelled to move to Israel as a result of local pressures or because, sooner or later, they will assimilate into the general society in which they are located. From this perspective, practically speaking, the Jews who count are the Jews of Israel; hence, they represent the Jewish people.

Those in the second camp not only argue that the Diaspora is likely to be in existence for the foreseeable future, but are prepared to reckon with the fact that the Jews of Israel constitute only slightly more than one-fifth of the total number of Jews in the world and that the largest Jewish community, that of the United States, has twice as many Jews as does

Israel. They argue that, since Israel is the only independent Jewish state and it is, in addition, the focal point of Jewish tradition, it is necessarily central to Jewish existence and certainly far more important than mere numbers would indicate. However, they are also prepared to see it as one unit within a Jewish polity that has other units as well.

To this observer, the latter view seems more correct. Not only is the Diaspora likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, but at least certain Diaspora communities will exist as organized and powerful in their own right. To make this statement is not to suggest that such communities will exist independently of Israel; on the contrary, they are strengthened by virtue of the existence of Israel (just as the reverse is true). The Jewish world is too interdependent for any other course but as a body politic; its parts interact, we hope, to strengthen each other. Thus, Israel is both a Jewish state *sui generis* and a Jewish community related to other Jewish communities on what could be considered a federal basis. Moreover, the most articulate elements among the Jews of Israel see the fostering of those relationships as one of the tasks of the state in all of its organs.

The principal institutional manifestations of this special relationship between Israel and the Jewish people are to be found in the "national institutions" functioning within the state's territory. These institutions are so named because they are considered to belong to the entire Jewish people (in Zionist terminology, nation) and not to the state of Israel, although their major purpose may be to carry out projects or perform certain functions within the state. Among them are the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization (WZO), which are responsible for settlement of the land and the Zionist education of Jews in Israel and outside, and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which is responsible for land purchases and development throughout the country wherever the Israel Lands Authority is not empowered to act.

The Hebrew University is formally designated a national institution; its library is also the national library and is so named. This reality is manifested in the university's board of governors, which is drawn from the Jewish community worldwide, and in the fact that some two-thirds of its budget comes from world Jewish sources and only ten percent from the funds of the state of Israel. While The Hebrew University is the only one formally designated by law as a national institution, all the other universities in the country have the same status, *de facto*, since they have the same arrangements for governance and funding, with the added factor that the Universities of Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beersheva (now Ben Gurion University) were founded by their respective municipalities which continue to make their contribution as well. The others also get some support from the budgets of the local governments in whose jurisdictions they are located.

The relationship between the Jewish Agency and the state of Israel was formalized in the covenant between the two bodies, adopted in 1952



through an Act of the Knesset. Since then, the Jewish Agency itself has been reconstituted to make it more broadly representative of the Jewish Diaspora. The relationship between the state and the universities has been formalized through the Council for Higher Education. It is noteworthy that budgeting and policy-making powers are shared by the state's Council for Higher Education, the universities' "national" governing boards, and each university's senate. These are roughly the equivalent of state, federal and local bodies, if one were to translate them into modern political terminology.

Through the Jewish Agency and its related organizations, the Jewish people as a whole undertakes numerous settlement, social and educational projects throughout the land of Israel, in both rural and urban areas and often in cooperation with the local authorities. The various bodies have regional offices in different parts of the country and, in some cases, local ones as well, which serve the nearby populations as if they were governmental agencies. Furthermore, the Jewish Agency is principally responsible for the construction of such local facilities as high schools and community centers with funds raised outside of Israel.

In addition to these highly structured institutions, the Israeli government seeks to institutionalize the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora through common organizations and associations structured along functional, professional, ideological, social and interest lines, it encourages study programs in Israel, and sends emissaries to Jewish communities overseas to work with them in strengthening Jewish life.

Finally, the Law of Return, which guarantees to virtually every Jew (except those fleeing criminal prosecution of one kind or another) the right of entry into Israel and more rapid naturalization than non-Jewish immigrants, in effect obligates the state and local governments of Israel to provide all services to every Jewish immigrant from the moment of his or her settlement in the country.<sup>3</sup> (In fact, because of the dominant political culture, such services and benefits are extended immediately to all those accepted as residents of the state).

In the meantime, Israelis have acquired representation on a number of other world Jewish bodies through a network of voluntary organizations functioning within the state, such as the Israeli section of the World Jewish Congress, the Israel Branch of the World Zionist Federation, and the like. While there has been talk, from time to time, of creating some overarching body to speak in the name of the entire Jewish people, the realities of Jewish existence have prevented any such development, nor is any likely to take place. Certainly the state of Israel would not surrender

3. There is a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the Law of Return. Israel has immigration laws similar to those of other Western countries, with permits issued upon application and naturalization following in due course. However, since Israel is considered the state of the Jewish people, Jews enter almost as if they were engaging in interstate migration in the American manner. It should be noted that similar laws hold true in other countries with regard to those who are considered their nationals even if they may be born outside of their borders.



any of its prerogatives to such a body, while Diaspora communities have a certain hesitancy about committing themselves to any such arrangements. Instead, they have developed numerous "authorities" (in contemporary governmental terminology) designed to undertake the special tasks which world Jewry seeks to undertake as a body. Many of these "authorities" focus on Israel. Others, such as the JDC and ORT, clearly do not, even though they may have programs in Israel. Israel's participation in such bodies and in such meetings as the Brussels conference on behalf of Soviet Jewry, often through official delegations, is another indication of how the state sees itself as part of the larger entity known as the Jewish people.

*Israel as a State in the Land of Israel*

Regardless of one's stand on the political issues of the day, it is possible to agree that the state of Israel as we know it, with or without the "territories," does not encompass the entire land of Israel, or what Aryeh Eliav (a noted dove) has referred to as "the land of the twelve tribes." To recognize this fact does not mean that one has to espouse an irredentist position with regard to the land. The historical record shows that, even in the heyday of Jewish national existence in the land, it was more common than not for the land to be divided among several states. In this connection, it is wise to recall that for a longer period than Jews possessed the whole of the land of Israel under a single government, two Jewish states (or, at times, provinces) existed within it or some part of it. Moreover, the two cases of Jewish control over the whole land (more or less), the brief Davidic and Hasmonean empires, came at a price that not many of us would wish to pay. Thus, while reestablishing Jewish national existence in the land can be seen as a proper exercise of the Jewish people's religious and historical rights, total redemption of the land may well be a matter of "forcing the end."

The reality that the state of Israel is less than the land of Israel has important implications. It means that there is a difference between religious commitment to the land and loyalty to the state; the two are not identical. In this writer's opinion, a good Jew must be strongly committed to the state for what it is, but need not make that commitment a monistic one; rather, it becomes part of one's multiple commitment to the land, the people, the Torah, and the Sovereign of Israel. This further reduces the tendency to view the state as an end, in and of itself. Many secular Jews have emphasized, mistakenly, love of state as the equivalent of love of country; religious Jews have not had that problem to the same extent, though some have also been occasionally susceptible to it.

At the same time, recognition of the reality that the land of Israel must presently be shared with another people does not require Jews to give up their love for all of it. It may be that the day will come when peace permits the settlements of Jews in all parts of the land, even if not within

territories embraced by the state. Even if those Jews are citizens of another state, the difference in their relationship to the land will be there.

In sum, it is politically and morally salutary to maintain the distinction between land and state, for the sake of the governors as well as of the governed. Moreover, according to the prophecies for the end of days, the land will be restored to the Jews in their dual capacity as members of the same people divided into twelve tribes, each of which will have its own government within the common federation.

### *Israel as a Compound Polity*

Many students of the Israeli political system have been misled by the apparent simplicity of the state's governmental apparatus, built as it is on classical European models, which have their origin in the hierarchical simplicity of Napoleonic France or the Prussia of Frederick the Great. For those familiar with Western European and American institutions, where polities are well-nigh exclusively territorially-based, government is organized fairly simply on two or three levels or planes (state and local, or federal, state and local), and where the greatest complexity may be found in the overlapping of local governments, the Israeli political system is complex indeed. Thereby it typifies the region in which it is located and the people whom it serves. It is of particular interest to note that *leharkiv*, the Hebrew word used to describe the organization of a polity or government, means "to compound," and the same word is used to describe complexity. It offers etymological testimony regarding the expectations inherent in the kind of environmental and cultural matrix in which the Jewish people always has been embedded and in which Israel must function today. The fundamentally contractual character of Jewish political life is reflected in the idea that bodies politic are compounded from different entities that retain their respective integrities even in the larger whole. This carries over into the shaping of the Israeli polity.

The state of Israel must be understood not simply as a Jewish state but as one which is compounded in a variety of ways. Thus, it is also compounded of several different ethno-religious minorities in addition to the Jewish majority: Muslim Arabs; Christians, mostly Arab, divided into various churches; Druse, Bahai, Circassians and Samaritans, each with its own socio-religious structure and legal status. Following the Middle Eastern pattern, all of these groups seek to preserve their corporate identity and Israel has granted them legal status, institutional frameworks and government support through which to do so. In this respect, Israel is but a more enlightened example of a general phenomenon among Middle Eastern governments, all of which have ethnic minorities which must be either accommodated in this way (as was true in Lebanon) or severely repressed (as in the case of the Kurds in Iraq and the Copts in Egypt). In a

sense, this represents a partial adaptation to the realities of what was known, in the Ottoman Empire, as the millet system, whereby every such group was constituted as a millet with its own internal autonomy.

As a consequence of all this, Israel is also a republic compounded of different religious groups, each recognized and supported by the state, yet claiming its own higher source of authority. Among the minorities, religious belief and practice is quite high and even among the Jewish majority it is significant, with perhaps one-third of the population quite religious in practice and another forty percent selective observers of Jewish tradition. Even the so-called "secular" Jews have certain expectations with regard to the expression of Jewish religious symbols and the institutional activities of the Jewish religious establishment which they see as befitting a Jewish state. Thus, there are very few people in any community who are opposed to the present arrangements.

As a result, the various religious communities have substantial institutional structures of their own, recognized in law, in some cases governed by bodies chosen under state law because they provide state-supported services and, thus, must follow certain standard procedures with regard to selection and representation (not to speak of accountability and proper administrative procedures). Thus, each religious community has its own religious courts whose judges, in most cases, hold commissions from the state on the basis of qualifications determined by the specific community, and are selected by the appropriate bodies of each community under procedures provided for under state law. These courts administer the religious laws of their community, each of which has its own legal system for matters within its competence and which stands in relationship to the secular legal system of Israel roughly as state law stands in relationship to federal law in a federation with a dual legal system.

While, from the point of view of the state, these religious groups obtain their powers through state law, from the perspective of each of the religious communities their powers flow directly from Heaven and their law represents Divine will. As far as they are concerned (and this goes for the Jewish religious authorities as much as for any of the others), the state should have only a minimal role in determining their existence and certainly no legitimate role in determining their powers other than that to which they are willing to acquiesce.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the several communities represents a further compound within its ranks. Every Arab locality is a compound of extended families—really clans—so much so that voting and political officeholding, not to speak of decision-making and the distribution of political rewards, are dependent upon the competition or cooperation among these ex-

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4. It would not be incorrect to estimate that as many as one-third of all Israelis hold the religious law of their respective communities in higher regard than the law of the state, including a small group of Jews (perhaps several hundred) who reject state law altogether.

tended families in each locality. Every so often a group of young people emerge to challenge this arrangement and there is talk in the land that the Arabs are modernizing and will no longer be bound by this kind of familial loyalty, but, every time, all but the most radical of the young end up following the lead of their families in these matters.

The Jewish community in Israel is a compound of a different sort. Rather than being based upon the organic connections of extended families, it was originally based upon federal connections between groups with different countries of origin or between different Zionist movements. In effect, the Jewish community of Israel consists of communities of culture and communities of interest, both of which manifest themselves through ideological movements and territorial settlements.

There are two kinds of communities of interest, those with a religious or ideological base, usually referred to as movements, and those whose concerns are primarily with the management of power or the securing of special economic or social goals. These communities of interest are reasonably well known to us all, although perhaps too little attention has been paid to the way in which they relate to one another, as they have since the beginning of the Zionist enterprise. Thus, the various groups of socialist Zionists, each with its own ideology, began to erect their own settlements and institutions in the country. Paralleling them were Zionists with a liberal (in the European sense) ideology and others whose primary ideology was derived from traditional religion, ranging from religious socialists, who based what was, after all, a modern collectivist ideology on ancient religious sources, to the religious right which saw no reason to allow any kinds of secular thinking or behavior in the state to be.

Each of these movements sought to create as comprehensive a range of institutions as it could, a kind of a non-territorial state of its own, but within the framework of the overall Zionist effort. Since they all wanted that effort to succeed, they federated together under various roof organizations and institutions through which they could pursue the common objective, even while contesting with one another with regard to the shape of the state to come and the vision that would inform it. This federation of movements became the basis of the present party system which organizes and informs Israel's political system. As such, it has persisted after the establishment of the state. As a result of the transition from the settlement stage, when ideological democracy was dominant, to a stage of rootedness when territoriality asserts itself, it may now be weakening. Nevertheless, the state's institutional infrastructure continues to reflect these prestate federal arrangements through the party system and the Histadrut, so much so that the arrangements inform even the ostensibly neutral governmental, cooperative and private bodies that are shared in common.

Today, as in the past, the country fairly well divides into three "camps": Labor, Liberal or center (known in Hebrew as *Ezrahi*), and Religious (with the latter closer to Labor than to the *Ezrahi* camp in most respects). The remarkable stability of voting patterns in Israel since 1948

(and, in reality, since the 1930s when the election to the governing bodies of the pre-state Jewish community are included) is a reflection of this basic division. Such electoral shifts as have taken place have rarely crossed the boundaries of the camps, reflecting only changes within each. Even the masses of post-1948 immigrants who tripled the population of the state were settled, employed, educated and politically absorbed on the basis of the "party key" through which the relative strength of the various parties within the three camps was maintained.

At one time, virtually all services to Jewish citizens were provided through the parties, or, in the case of Labor, through the Histadrut, which united several of the different labor parties for certain purposes. Again, the analogy to a federal system is apt. Just as in a federal territorial polity one has to be a resident of a state to avail oneself of the services of the polity as a whole, so, too, in pre-state Israel was it necessary to be linked to a party or camp. With the establishment of the state, the government took over more and more of the services, beginning with the military (before 1948, the movements actually had separate para-military formations), continuing with the schools (which are subdivided into trends to accommodate the different religious attitudes within the Jewish community) and most social services. The parties or camps, however, still retain control of sports (the football leagues, for example, are organized on the basis of party teams, although the divisions have become meaningless since the players are recruited on the basis of their ability without any regard to their party orientation if, indeed, they have any), health insurance and ordinary medical facilities, and, to an extent, banking. Even the functions that have been absorbed by formal institutions of government maintain an informal division by party key for employment purposes.

The importance of the compound of parties is such that even the most casual student of Israeli affairs is aware of it. In fact, however, these manifestations of the old divisions are disappearing. More and more services are provided neutrally by the state or local governments or, as is more often the case, through cooperative arrangements involving both. Party influence exists in the government structure and touches primarily those who pursue governmental careers rather than the public at large, although, in a government-permeated society, this is by no means an insignificant bastion of party strength. The expectation is that, aside from the division between the strictly religious and non- or not-so-religious, the divisions themselves will continue to grow weaker (but not necessarily disappear), unless there is a strong upsurge of secular ideology. The *raison d'être* for many of the divisions has so weakened that only in the religious camp do the ideological justifications remain sufficiently strong to create demands of pre-state intensity and they are accommodated by allowing for parallel institutions in many fields.

Similarly, those communities which have acquired a primarily territorial identity are becoming increasingly important as the country makes the transition from the days of its ideologically rooted founding to

a more settled character. Whatever the criticism sometimes raised against territorially based communities, it is generally recognized that the expression of interest on a territorial basis is natural enough to any society and certainly not foreign to Israel. While the political parties may seem to oppose the shift to territorially based representation on ideological grounds, they do so, in fact, primarily because their own self-interest demands that they protect their present bases. At best, they can argue that such interest supports parochialism, an argument which is countered by the strong desire on the part of Israelis to achieve greater rootedness in the country, rootedness which includes local patriotism.

Circumstances have led to the emergence of a state that is more or less organized to accommodate certain of the complexities of its population but within a formal structure that was borrowed whole from another context altogether. In fact, that structure goes against the grain of most of the realities of Israeli society and politics and has had to be accommodated to them by a heavy reliance on extra-legal methods. The mismatch has led to an increasing dysfunctionality in the governance of the state.

While there is something to be said for having allowed the system just to evolve on a pragmatic basis, as it has, focusing on the relationships desired in each case rather than on the formalities of structure, there does come a point where structure itself is crucial, if only because of the way that it influences relationships. Israel has now reached that point, as evidenced by the demands for structural reform that abound as many Israelis have begun to perceive, even dimly, that the structure of their governing institutions does not square with their expectations as citizens. The character of the die-hard resistance to those structural changes on the part of those in power only adds weight to the evidence.

The present structure also goes against the grain of the Jewish political tradition. This is not readily perceived by a population that remains unaware of that tradition, even though it is the impact of the behavioral aspects of that tradition on a structure that is derived from nineteenth century European models which has led to the mismatch. Nor are Israelis particularly aware of the compound character of their polity. Even those who would be, look at the system, for the most part, through glasses colored by non-indigenous ideologies or methodologies that lead them away from a proper perception of the reality in which they live. Thus, the religious camp has not come to grips with the pluralistic compound in the state, the Labor camp has not come to grips with the non-ideological character of the emerging territorial democracy, and none of the camps is prepared to come to grips with the structural problem.

In the past few years much has begun to be said about the problematics of the Jewishness of the Jewish state. Here is but another example of that problem. Only the rediscovery of the Jewish political tradition is likely to make possible the political transformations that will bring about a Jewish definition of statehood suitable for Israel's compound polity.

# *Our English Cousins – Observations on Recent Anglo-Jewish History*

Review-Essay by SEFTON TEMKIN

*Basil Henriques—A Portrait.* By L.L. LOEWE. Henley, London and Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1976. pp. 181.

*The United Synagogue 1870-1970.* By AUBREY NEWMAN. Henley, London and Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1976. pp.239.

THROUGH CHAIM BERMANT'S BOOK OF THAT name, students of Jewish life have become acquainted with the term "The Cousinhood," descriptive of the interrelated families who managed the leading institutions of the Anglo-Jewish community up to, say, fifty years ago. Here we have two dissimilar books, one a sketch of a very self-willed individual, the other a formal history of a rather heavy, prosaic institution, but both of them reflecting the activities and attitudes of members of the Cousinhood.

Basil Henriques (1890-1961) came of a family which had fled Spain because of the Inquisition and had settled in the West Indies. His immediate forebears were substantial London merchants who had become pillars of the austere and highly conservative reform synagogue established in 1842—a kind of Jewish equivalent to the earnest and sober Evangelical Anglicanism which London merchants might be expected to avow in Early Victorian days: plain Biblical religion, with no extravagant ceremonies but everything performed decently and in good order.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, a definite part of his upbringing was attachment to decorous worship and belief in the Bible. One might have expected, after a conventional education at England's best schools, the kind of career which many members of the Cousinhood accepted: entry into a far from demanding family business, coupled with dutiful service on the committee of the family synagogue and of one or more family charities. However, Henriques had in him an early strain of religious mysticism, not obviously deriving from the rigidly formal family synagogue, which the atmosphere

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1. "... as I wore a skull cap I did not get a headache" young Henriques noted in his diary after a Yom Kippur service. In those days, nothing less than a top hat was considered proper, especially on Yom Kippur, when its rigidity involved extra penance.

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of pre-1914 Oxford stimulated. The university also roused his interest in social questions which were tormenting some of the well-to-do in the years immediately prior to the First World War. Apart from Christian influences, the personality of Claude Montefiore was also important in forming his outlook; it helped to bring these strands together and, on leaving Oxford, Henriques decided to give himself to voluntary social work among "our poor foreign co-religionists" (as the Cousinhood described them) who were then streaming into the East End of London.

This work started with a boys' club in one of the poorest sections of the city. It was interrupted by active service the First World War, but, in due course, the Club developed into a multi-purpose Settlement in which Henriques and his wife made their home. "The Warden is their big brother, stimulus, father and boon companion," the writer E.V. Lucas noted of Henriques' relationship with his boys. Many-sided as were the Settlement's activities, it provided an outlet for only part of his energies. He was a magistrate, presiding over a London juvenile court; he was a prison visitor; and the Probation Service, the National Association of Boys Clubs, the Jewish Orphanage, and the London Hospital were some of the institutions to which he gave daily personal service. Henriques' influence went further as he became one of England's leading authorities on social work and was drawn upon for his advice even from outside the country.

His was not the first effort of its kind, but it was distinctive because it was permeated by a strongly personal religious feeling. His religious outlook was what in this country would have been called "Classical Reform." It was anti-nomian, but with a strong emphasis on personal belief and personal prayer. A synagogue was an important feature of his Settlement, and in it he was a lay preacher, writing his own prayers and, even though unendowed with technical knowledge, compiling his own prayer book.

Henriques designed a badge which displayed the coat of arms of the University of Oxford surmounted by St. George slaying the dragon. One wonders whether he visualized himself as the Jewish St. George; the dragons were numerous and included the evils of the social system, Zionism, Orthodox Judaism, the sluggishness of the bureaucracy and the shortcomings of the legal system.

Natural endowments equipped him to play the role of dragon slayer. Over six feet tall, he was a handsome man, with a mellifluous voice which could register all the stops, from the fiercest rage to the tenderest sympathy. Similarly, his activities evoked all the reactions, also from the fiercest rage to the tenderest sympathy. To some he was prophet, saint and martyr; to others he was arrogant, overbearing and patronising. Naturally, ideological differences had their effect on personal assessments. His anti-Zionism set him apart from the majority, and his posture—that a kind of upper class Anglicanism with a faint Jewish colouration was God's gift to the benighted immigrants of the East

End—bound by the rigours of outward ceremonialism, could not but arouse suspicions as to the direction in which he was heading. In pursuing his campaign, his methods showed nothing of the team spirit which it was his purpose to inculcate into his clients. An admirer said that “everybody could work under him, nobody could work with him,” and his biographer observes that “Sometimes he did not seem to mind who got hurt on the way as long as he reached his objective.”

He was clearly out of place in the post-War world. Accustomed to the problems arising from poverty, those accompanying the redistribution of wealth and the breakdown of Victorian morality were strange to him. Long concerned with the problem of anglicising the immigrants, he was not equipped to judaize their children. Once the State of Israel had been proclaimed, he had the dignity to discontinue his opposition to Zionism, but there is no reason to assume that he was any more prescient than the Zionists in adjusting himself to the changed horizons of the Jewish world.

Basil Henriques’ biographer happens to be his brother-in-law. Mr. Loewe has produced an effective piece of work. It is two dimensional, plumbs no depths and is a portrait with the minimum of background, but gains through being direct and unpretentious—laconic even—and Henriques’ qualities and achievements come out the better because his shortcomings are not concealed. When those shortcomings are balanced, we see one of the products of the late Victorian age—one of the self-sacrificing minority among the Jewish minority among the well-to-do minority who gave themselves to the betterment of their fellow men and, knowingly or otherwise, helped to pave the way for the Welfare State.

## II

Among the institutions at which Basil Henriques thundered his impatience was the London United Synagogue. For good or ill, this body has left a distinct impress on the Anglo-Jewish community.

The United Synagogue, (Bermant observes) is the Church of England of Anglo-Jewry and is in many ways modelled on it, and like the C. of E. everyone berates it but no one would wish to be without it. . .

The comparison must not be taken literally. The structure of the two organisations bears no resemblance, and the United Synagogue neither sought to be comprehensive nor did it ever display the breadth of outlook that has characterised the Church of England for the greater part of its history. However, in a society where the Christian majority has an official religion, the Jewish minority is likely to need one also, and this the United Synagogue readily supplies.

The establishment and growth of such a body within a community that is based on the voluntary principle is an achievement. In most of continental Europe, Jewish communal organization was stamped with the pattern laid down by the government (One thinks immediately of the

consistorial system laid down by Napoleon); in the United States, on the other hand, it is considered axiomatic that each synagogue-congregation must be absolutely independent. In London, in 1870, five synagogues merged into a single congregation while retaining their separate places of worship. The United Synagogue has never been all-embracing—the Provinces, the Sephardim, the separatist Orthodox and the non-Orthodox have always stood outside—but it has been powerful enough to impress a pattern on the Anglo-Jewish community as a whole. For the United Synagogue followed the Jewish population of the Metropolis as it dispersed first to the inner and then to the outer suburbs, so that today it consists of some eighty units.

It is important to note that the United Synagogue is no association of congregations; it is a single congregation, and the relationship between headquarters and the branches depends on control rather than on cooperation. Property is held in common and income is pooled, so that the richer units help the poorer. When a synagogue ceases to be viable the central body is empowered to close it; members can transfer their rights to other synagogues, and the proceeds of the sale of the property are used to make loans for building new synagogues.

One weakness of the system is that it discourages local initiative. Power in federations usually gravitates to the centre, and the magnates who ran the head office had little difficulty in subordinating the local officers and boards of management. As resources were pooled, any proposal for action had to be looked at in the light of its effect on the finances of the United Synagogue as a whole. Not merely the cost of a new building, but the price of a robe for a *shammos* was multiplied by the number of constituents in the union and as, in Victorian England, niggardliness with public funds was a moral duty, the request could easily be shot down. Where, in the United States, synagogues would compete with each other to do more, in London they were held back with dark forebodings as to what would happen if all synagogues wanted similar innovations.

A failure yet more serious to be laid at the door of this system is in regard to the rabbinate. The constitution of the United Synagogue makes the Chief Rabbi its sole religious authority. His consent is needed before anyone can occupy a pulpit, and no change may be made in the ritual without his authority; the congregational rabbi is an official without rights, required to defer to the Chief Rabbi in the ecclesiastical sphere and to the head office in the administrative. Obviously, such a position—providing, at best, a cushion rather than a challenge—holds out little attraction to the man of energy and initiative. Its deficiencies were partly masked in pre-War days when, for *frum* boys coming from the continent of Europe, a position with the United Synagogue offered opportunities for advancement that were not available elsewhere. Social and demographic changes since then have laid bare the weakness.

When immigration from Eastern Europe was heavy, relations with the immigrants were often difficult. The formal, anglicised and often lax Orthodoxy of the United Synagogue was not to the taste of the newcomers, but they were members of the same family religiously, in contrast to the situation in the United States where, the established congregations having embraced Reform, there was no such relationship. The United Synagogue felt a sense of responsibility to the immigrants and had enough flexibility to be able to absorb them. This helped the Anglo-Jewish community to maintain the organisational unity on which it sets tremendous store, but since then the children of the immigrants have taken it over, and its hierarchical ecclesiastical system, once the bane of the right wing Orthodox, has now been turned round to fasten their version of Orthodoxy onto the Anglo-Jewish community as a whole. At the same time, communal interests came to focus on causes detached from the synagogue. For the first quarter of a century after the war, Anglo-Jewry experienced favourable, if illusory, economic breezes, and the expertise in parsimony which the United Synagogue administration made into a religion offered no guiding star to those who had come up in the world. Routine trimmings of synagogue expenditure had none of the stimulus of a large-scale campaign for the State of Israel. These factors sapped the leadership of the United Synagogue just at a time when strength was needed to lift it out of its rut.

However, for a community which prefers to rely on the services of amateurs, the United Synagogue did break fresh ground by commissioning a professional to write its centenary history. The results are disappointing. Mr. Newman writes well, and it is obvious that painstaking research lies behind his work, but what is presented to the public is a job half done. It is as if we were offered a building with the foundations laid out but with some of the rooms finished and furnished in detail and others left in skeleton form. There are excellent maps showing the geographical spread of the United Synagogue, but the constitution is not set out. Worse, the financial system, which is virtually the Ten Commandments of the organization, and is crucial to the functioning of the entire system, is not described, though, oddly enough, full details are given of one phase of its expenditure for the years 1927-31. The role of certain individuals is given at length, but others, equally important, are overlooked. One gets the impression that Mr. Newman's sponsors may have demanded a manuscript before he had finished his work.

### III

For its first seventy years the United Synagogue was very much a Cousinhood institution. Its outstanding figure was Sir Robert Waley Cohen (1877-1952), a personality of unusual achievements to whom some reference is appropriate just after the centenary of his birth.

Robert Waley Cohen came from the family that was at the very heart

of the Cousinhood. After all, the founder of the clan, Levi Barent Cohen, provided daughters of whom one married Nathan Mayer Rothschild and another Moses Montefiore; and among his descendants we find members of parliament, judges, financiers and men of affairs of every description. They give the impression of being diligent rather than dynamic, and that certainly characterises the institutions which they managed.

Like Basil Henriques, Robert Waley Cohen was the antithesis of the stolid group from which he sprang. He was dynamic as well as diligent. If, giving the whole of his time to voluntary public work, Basil Henriques played a leading role in a string of organisations, Waley Cohen did as much, and possibly more, but as an adjunct to a brilliant and demanding business career. Those who encountered him in one field of interest could hardly grasp that it was one of many; that the oil magnate in an international business which was still in the buccaneering stage was one of England's most accomplished cellists; that the human dynamo whose time was devoured by a frenzied succession of committee meetings was also a successful farmer; that the man who, as often as not, was weathering the storms that blew through the Anglo-Jewish community was also spending his time with important institutions outside.

Like Basil Henriques also, Waley Cohen came from a solid, devout Anglo-Jewish family, the one not different in religious outlook from the other, though Waley Cohen's had a nominally Orthodox allegiance. As a student, his field of interest was meteorology, but a chance remark of his father's led to his joining the young Shell oil company in 1901. By the time he was thirty he had established himself as one of the builders and rulers of a growing industrial empire. This was before the Seven Sisters had divided the world between them and, thus, Waley Cohen was a contender in the great battles with Standard Oil and lesser rivals.

In 1913 he became Treasurer of the United Synagogue. Both his father and his father-in-law had held the office before him; an uncle had been virtual founder of the institution; his maternal grandfather had drafted its constitution:—indeed, a "Cousinhood" operation. Six years later, as Vice-President, he became its dominant figure, and his eventual elevation to the presidency, which he held until his death, merely registered an accomplished fact.

Waley Cohen seemed born to dominate. His leonine head with protruding jaw, tightly pressed lips and a penetrating eye, surmounted an impressive torso. Rather unexpectedly, a voice that was soft and smooth proceeded from this huge frame, but the seeming contradiction disappeared in moments of excitement or obstructiveness (a favourite tactic), for then the voice was raised to a shout, and the shout was reinforced by considerable table banging. Behind all of these activities was physical and mental energy beyond compare, and little did the outside world realise that the decisions of decorous Jewish institutions were the result of Waley Cohen filibusters. In time, reputation often made these diversions un-

necessary, for the mention of his name raised apprehension; and then, even without the mention of his name, *rabbanim* and *shul* officials would shape their activities by the possibility that they might be subjected to Sir Robert's penetrating stare and equally penetrating questions.

His great fault was that he was a bully. But he never bore malice towards those who beat him, and it would be grossly unfair to picture him as a man who was simply out to wear down his opponents. He had an insatiable appetite for work; he was at the disposal of the Jewish community day and night, and to the humdrum details of its affairs he devoted the same attention that he gave to the mammoth industry of which he was a leader. One of the accomplishments of the United Synagogue during his regime was expansion into the suburbs, and, in 1934, the secretaries of the United Synagogue noted:

In the old days the Synagogues generally found their own sites, and merely came to the United Synagogue for a loan. Nowadays we do practically everything for them . . . We carry on all the negotiations in fixing up with the Ground Landlords, developing the scheme, settling plans, obtaining tenders and putting up the buildings. Estimates have to be drafted and re-drafted . . .

Out of this lament emerges a picture of the tycoon who, having disposed of oil tankers, pipe lines and price wars by five o'clock in the afternoon, kept the United Synagogue office at work until eleven while he investigated the details of bricks and plasterwork and drainage, as well as the investments and pensions of a group of synagogues.

It must be added that the United Synagogue was a power base from which he extended his influence to most areas of Anglo-Jewish life. Religious education, Jewish-Christian relations and the problems of refugees were among the problems that he attacked with his tempestuous energy and combative instincts.

The question must be asked: what was the mainspring of this devoted activity for the Jewish community? Lust for power it could hardly have been, because Royal Dutch-Shell gave him all the power that a man could want, and, if he needed an extra fill, he could get it on far easier terms outside of the Jewish community. Moreover, while secular Jewish nationalism was anathema and Jewish culture he treated as a wasteful diversion from things of more immediate importance, the string of institutions which he dominated upheld an Orthodox Judaism which he did not practise. His position might be compared to the Welfare Fund-Jewish Center Jewishness known in this country, save that it was tied by an institutional commitment to Orthodoxy; the community became an ongoing concern, without much regard to the ideals for which organisations stood. Of course, there were formal obeisances to religion more obvious than in the American counterpart. There was also a note of patronage. The upper classes would care for the lower (usually foreigners) and turn



them into Englishmen, and the lower classes would show deference to the upper; and in every parish there would be a rector who would visit the sick, bury the dead, comfort the bereaved and perform the divine offices at the appointed times. The whole background of the United Synagogue was "broad church," to borrow a term from the Church of England; that is, the ritual, which was fixed, save that the externalities were polished up to suit the taste of an emancipated community, remained under the control of the Orthodox rabbinate, but politeness restrained interference with the ways of the laity.

The dichotomy is obvious, and it may be compared with the relationship of the Jewish Theological Seminary to its wealthy Reform patrons earlier in the century. The situation in America was healthier because the differences were openly acknowledged, whereas in England they were brushed under the carpet wherever possible. The building up of a corps of teachers who would expound a United Synagogue viewpoint would have been a waste of money to Sir Robert; hence, nothing like an ideology emerged from his activities and that of his peers.

In the far larger American Jewish community it was not possible for any individual to exercise the kind of sway that Sir Robert assumed, but comparisons might be made with the leadership of Louis Marshall. However, Sir Robert, despite his services to education in other fields, showed none of Louis Marshall's concern for Jewish scholarship. On one occasion the United Synagogue refused to allow a constituent to buy a few copies of the Hertz Chumash out of its surplus funds. It was as if he felt that the job of supplying literature for the synagogue had been completed once Singer had provided Anglo-Jewry with its book of common prayer.

As time went on the "broad church" sentiment went out of style. The prospect of a world made safe for democracy as a reward for the sacrifices of the First World War faded away, and renewed persecutions made Jews turn inwards and mistrust that which was identified with the Gentile world. The pre-War immigrants and their children were establishing themselves in England and no longer needed the mediation of the Cousinhood. Social Reform captured the hearts of the younger generation and, to them, Waley Cohen was identified with the selfishness of big business. An equally representative segment gave itself to Zionism and, to them, Waley Cohen stood for assimilation. Whether or not a person was himself committed to Orthodoxy, the argument that a non-Orthodox Jew was unfit to rule Orthodox institutions was difficult to rebut.

All of these feelings were compounded by Waley Cohen's long-standing quarrel with the then Chief Rabbi, Dr. Joseph Herman Hertz. In the eye of the present writer, Waley Cohen was the bigger man of the two, but a big man can have a streak of pettiness, and it came out in the attempts of this strong believer in the authority of the leader to push around his own ecclesiastical chief. He failed and lost through the recoil: *qui mange du Pape en meurt*. Some of the incidents in the jousting between



these sharply spoken combatants attained the level of the ludicrous, but they cannot detain us here. Two points may be made. First: there were persons in Hertz's entourage who deliberately set out to provoke him. Second: the view that the quarrel was basically personal rather than ideological is supported by the fact that, on the London Beth Din, Waley Cohen placed Rabbi Yeheskiel Abramski, a Talmudist of exceptional strength whose Orthodoxy was far more unbending than Hertz's: but that merely helped to push the United Synagogue to the right of its old position.

Waley Cohen was not a Zionist, though he claimed to be one, and Weizmann tried to rope him into the organisation. However, he was the one member of the Cousinhood who brought an active and practical interest to the development of Palestine. He set up the Palestine Corporation and, through his reputation as an industrialist, was able to bring much needed capital to that country, and played a leading role in having the oil refinery built at Haifa. But he was out of his element when he ventured into the political controversies connected with administration of the Palestine Mandate and they did nothing to add to his reputation.

The drift to war in 1939, accompanied by the intensification of the refugee problem and the abandonment by the British government of its obligations under the Palestine mandate, added to the discord within the Anglo-Jewish community. These were compounded, though usually kept below the surface, by the circumstances of war-time life. Many areas had to be evacuated, and congregations which sprang up in unfamiliar country districts needed to be ministered to; there was the bitterness arising from a feeling of impotence in the face of the unimaginable onslaught on the Jews of Europe. In the thousand and one emergencies—and the accompanying quarrels—which arose during this period we find Waley Cohen in a leading position all of the time.

With his duties to Jewish organisations we find intertwined one position of an official character: the leader of the oil industry became adviser on kosher food to the Ministry of Food, and we find him handling such problems as the availability of cattle for *shehitah*, the substitution of additional maragrine for bacon and the distribution of mazot—all in accordance with the *din*. Air raids, blackouts and similar dislocations were ignored in the pursuit of this work. It is no denigration of the importance of kashrut to ask whether a great industrialist might not feel a little disappointed that this was his only official assignment, especially as, during the First World War, he had been given the far more responsible position of adviser on petroleum to the British Army. If Waley Cohen felt any disappointment, he concealed it; duty came first.

Throughout the world-wide conflict, the war with Hertz spluttered on. In the final act we find Waley Cohen challenging, at one and the same time, both the authority of the Chief Rabbi and the intense pro-Zionist

sentiment of the majority of the Anglo-Jewish community. The issue was not fought out because Hertz died early in 1946.

Thereafter, the temperature cooled, and Waley Cohen seemed set on making his own sunset reflect the ideals of peace and unity. It naturally fell to him to play the leading role in selecting the new Chief Rabbi, but it was an exercise in the diplomacy, tact and patience that he knew how to use as readily as the steam roller, with the result that Hertz' successor received a unanimous call, which not even Rothschild had been able to secure for Hertz. Part of the price of this unity was to raise the status of the London Beth Din in relation to the Chief Rabbi, and government by *dayyanim* helped, in subsequent years, to harden the lines of Orthodoxy.

While he was pursuing the search for a chief rabbi, Waley Cohen became more tolerable to the Zionists, and, by 1947, he became reconciled to the necessity of partitioning Palestine and establishing a Jewish State.

The sunset was tranquil and, the tempests over, Waley Cohen was recognised as the devoted and courageous servant of his fellow Jews. But could it have been otherwise than disappointing? The British Empire, which had afforded scope and protection for his global business activities, no longer had any reality, and England had embraced socialist doctrines which he abhorred. Within the Jewish community, the Victorian compromises which allowed tradition to go hand in hand with progress and paternalism with equality, no longer held sway. No members of the Cousinhood were coming up to take over the burdens which he and his family had taken for granted. With him the rule of the Cousinhood went out—in glory, it is true, occasionally mourned—but out forever.

A final reflection: How utterly dissimilar were Basil Henriques and Robert Waley Cohen from the Englishmen that they so ardently desired English Jews to be.

## REVIEWS

### **Fictionalizing New York's Lower East Side**

*From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan.* By JULES CHAMETZKY. Amherst. University of Massachusetts Press, 1977. 161 pp. \$10.

*Reviewed by* SANFORD PINSKER

IRVING HOWE concludes *World of Our Fathers*, his encyclopedic study of America's immigrant Jews, on the

following note: "We take pleasure in having been related to those self-educated workers, those sustaining women, those almost-forgotten writers and speakers devoted to excitements of controversy and thought." Aided by a growing number of scholarly works (including books which pre-date Howe's, such as Moses Rischin's *The Promised City* or Ronald Sanders' *The Downtown Jews*) and on other, more "popular" fronts, by the success of a

film like *Hester Street* (based on Cahan's novel, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*), the Lower East Side has become a fixed point in our collective imagination. It is here, in the teeming ghetto that mushroomed New York's Jewish population from 80,000 in 1880 to 1,100,000 in 1910, that the textures of immigrant life seem most clearly defined. And it is here that a present generation of American Jews have vicariously returned, to make contact once again with those workers and women, writers and speakers whom Irving Howe celebrates so lovingly.

No single figure dominated this landscape more than did Abraham Cahan. He was, at one and the same time, the Lower East Side's conscience and mythographer, its link with Russian culture and American values, its pragmatic advice-giver and unflagging Socialist. Indeed, the very span of his life (from his birth in Podberezy, a small village near Vilna, in 1860, to his death in New York City in 1951) provides a convenient index of the American-Jewish experience. His was a life spent among quotidian realities, with the full weight of contradictory impulses and wrenching ambivalences. As Chametzky points out:

That no resolution of the problems of a people brought within a generation from an almost medieval existence into the contemporary world was possible within his own sensibility and time, is evident in the name of a major novel he planned—*The Chasm*—and in the fact that it was never completed . . . Nevertheless, no other immigrant or American, so far as I know, saw the problems in as full a dimension as Cahan did or addressed them with as much integrity and art (pp. x-xi).

Above all else, Abraham Cahan was a man of letters—as the editor

of the influential *Jewish Daily Forward* (over which he exercised an iron-fisted control for nearly forty-five years), as a staff member of Lincoln Steffens' *Commercial Advertiser*, as a frequent contributor to magazines like *Harper's Weekly*, *Atlantic*, *Nation* and *American Mercury* and, of course, as a writer of fiction.

Chametzky's study concentrates upon the last dimension. The result is a book which balances thumbnail sketches of Cahan's diverse activities (e.g. Socialist lecturer, evening school teacher of English, world traveller, political organizer) with the first systematic critique of his fiction. And, yet, *From the Ghetto* is less truncated than this description might suggest. The same impulses toward pragmatic realism and mediation which characterized his public life also affected his literary values. Chametzky puts it this way:

Cahan was uniquely qualified to tender the subject of his fiction . . . He had sympathy for the Jews, his people, but as a Realist he eschewed mere advocacy and tendentiousness. He understood the limitations of the Jewish immigrant—indeed one of his self-proclaimed tasks for more than a dozen years had been to help bring a semi-literate, largely uneducated and backward people (despite the high value placed on learning in the Jewish ethos, this was the truth about most of them) into the contemporary and enlightened world. On the other hand, a feeling of gross superiority would be offensive and, indeed, un-socialist, although there was always an elitist element in his socialism. He felt, too, the old ideal of speaking to and identifying with a larger humanity, although he never felt the need to emancipate himself entirely from a Jewish past (p. 54).

In part, Chametzky's study is "introductory"—that is, it provides

background material for each story or novel, plot summaries and a very useful "Selected Bibliography." When the book under discussion is, say, *The White Terror and the Red: A Novel of Revolutionary Russia* (published by A. S. Barnes & Co., in 1905, and once again, in 1975, by Arno Press), such discussions perform a valuable service; when the story is *Rafael Naaizokh Iz Gevoren A Sozialist*" (Rafael Naaizokh Becomes a Socialist), we are doubly in Professor Chametzky's debt.

To write about Cahan's fiction with authority, a knowledge of Yiddish is essential. Chametzky is not only an accomplished Yiddishist, but he understands the central importance that language *per se* plays in Cahan's work. To be sure, others have recognized this dimension. In a review of *Yekl: A Tale of the Ghetto* (1896), William Dean Howells made a telling—and, one might add, prophetic—remark about the nature of American-Jewish fiction: "Perhaps we shall have a New York jargon which shall be to English what the native Yiddish of his characters is to Hebrew, and it will be interlarded [an unfortunate turn-of-phrase!] with Russian, Polish and German words, as their present jargon is with English vocabularies and with American slang." Chametzky expands the insight until it becomes the prism through which Cahan's fiction can be seen steadily and whole:

... Cahan was fascinated by the differences among languages as well as the class and character differentiations within a language. For

him, Russian was the embodiment of his intellectual life, Yiddish of the emotional, English of the fascinating and rich "other" world, the mastery of which was a measure of one's sophistication and status (p. 55).

Abraham Cahan's fiction—both in English and Yiddish—was written between 1892 and 1917. In those twenty-five years he published three novels (*Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, 1896; *The White Terror and the Red: A Novel of Revolutionary Russia*, 1905; and *The Rise of David Levinsky*, 1917), a collection entitled *The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of the New York Ghetto* (1898) and a dozen stories evenly divided between those written in English and those in Yiddish. Some of Cahan's fictions have, at best, an antiquarian interest, some remain impressive achievements in literary Realism, but one—*The Rise of David Levinsky*—is an authentic American classic. In that haunting testament of dislocation and loss, of a past that fades into anguished memory and a present which does not, to use Levinsky's term, "comport," Cahan wrote the quintessential novel of the immigrant experience.

But as Chametzky shrewdly adds: "Put that way it is also a quintessentially American book." *From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan* provides the fullest *how* and *why* we have thus far.

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# JUDAISM

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